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NATIONAL DESTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION IN FRANCE AS SEEN IN MODERN LITERATURE AND IN THE NEO-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT.

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In order better to understand the intellectual and moral state of the France of to-day, let us cast a glance over the past centuries.

In the XVIIth century the Christian faith was sovereign. A creed universally received, guided and limited intellectual activity. It was the time of the great pulpit orators, Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fléchier, Massillon; the time of Fénelon, Racine and Pascal, all directly inspired by the Christian church. Scholasticism had not yet been superseded. The philosophers of the coming era, Descartes and Malebranche, took great care not to shock the received religious beliefs.

During the XVIIIth century the spirit of France changed. The materialistic philosophy triumphed with d'Alembert, Diderot, Helvétius, d'Olbach, Condorcet. There are no more Christian orators. The pious Racine has been succeeded on the theatre by Voltaire with his sardonic laughter. It is his spirit which dominates the century. Rousseau preaches his crusade against civilized society. If the leaders of the century be no more Christians, they are still dogmatic. The infallibility of reason and the all-sufficiency of science are the two articles of the new creed. These convictions had their great day during the French Revolution, and culminated in the cult of reason symbolized by a woman seated on the altar of the Christian faith dethroned.

The first half of the XIXth century is in striking contrast with the century just elapsed. Pure intellectual life had decreased during the closing troublous period.

The wars of the Revolution and of the empire, which led the French youth through the whole of Europe, brought in a new spirit and new morals. The multiplicity and the diversity of the points of view acquired during these travels in foreign and little known lands, induced dilettantism. After having lived for a quarter of a century of an intensely active life, breathed the fiery air of the Revolutionary period and drunk the intoxicating waters of Napoleon's successes, France was suddenly reduced to the tepid savor of passive life. Haunting dreams of grandeur, the need of quenching a thirst for strong sensations, the abundance of the physical energy accumulated during the gigantic struggles of the empire, produced a general malaise and a longing which found their expression in the literature of the time known as "Romantisme."

Science was progressing rapidly. The natural sciences had their great first representatives in Lamarck, Cuvier, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Philosophy had Jouffroy and Auguste Comte. The Positivism of the latter and English Determinism tended to quiet the

restlessness. The Christian faith did not regain its lost ground, but it was more kindly treated.

As the century passes, men perceive more and more clearly that reason and science have not kept their promises. No more offerings are brought in open daylight to the Goddess Reason. Doubt and pessimism rise. Schopenhauer contributes his theories of which France was certainly not in need, and Renan adds to it his indifferent tranquillity and his nice taste for mystical sensations, and so we reach the débâcle of 1870.

Literature had changed with the development of the exact sciences and the accompanying agnostic tendencies in philosophy. The fantastic world, in which the over-excited imagination of the Romantics lived, vanished with them and sedate Naturalism replaced it. Its programme is the reproduction of life as it is, in all its crude reality. Flaubert, the de Goncourt, Zola, etc., lead the movement. Each one depicts to us a parcel of our miserable humanity. They all agree to make of life, of man, of woman in particular, a disheartening picture. No more ideal; it is all flesh, lust and fatality. Very happily this literary school by which France has been infected during the past years is doomed. A reaction against it has set in.

The Frenchman glories in the fact that his fatherland directed the chariot of progress in the past ages. He is gifted with a more delicate, a finer nature; his mind is more pliant, more subtle, than that of his German or English neighbors. He cannot live as easily as they of an exclusive intellectual life, for he is more true to the double unity of human nature and does not so easily sever his emotional from his intellectual life. His inertia is less, and he answers quicker to internal or external stimuli. Consequently, his oscillations are more numerous and more rapid. While the English people have not yet reacted to the practical conclusions of determinism, the French people have already tested it, experienced its insufficiency to satisfy the deepest needs of the heart, and are now struggling to shake off this incomplete philosophy by which they cannot live, in order to put in its place some belief which shall give rest to their tormented souls.

It seems to us that once more France is pointing out the way for a nearer approach to the practical truths of life.

The objectified consciousness of the race, as expressed in the Roman Catholic Christian religion and in Positivism, has been overgrown. The former does not answer to the enlarged mental life; the latter proves insufficient inasmuch as it does not recognize the claims of the religious nature. The French are left without a belief by which to direct their lives; they are adrift. They know it, and their conscious wandering in a world without issue and without meaning, vents itself in pessimism. Sensualism and, rarely, stoicism, in which they seek refuge, are not remedies but only phases of the disease.

What way out of this crisis will nature find? That is the question with which we are concerned in these lectures. We shall first seek, in literature, which is the expression of society, what is the spirit, what the moral and intellectual tendencies prevalent in French life; and subsequently, we shall consider the neo-Christian movement, its significance, and the claim it makes for the solution of the problem.

It is not our purpose to thoroughly perform this double task. Our ambition is limited to giving some idea of the remarkable transformation through which France is passing.

I. ARTIST SENSUALISTS; THE QUEST FOR NEW SENSATIONS; NIHILISM AND PESSIMISM.

We begin with an extreme case of perverted sensualism, a person who, no doubt, does not represent exactly a great number of Parisians, but who, nevertheless, indicates well an existing tendency.

Remember that we move in the literary sphere, but do not believe on that account that what we shall say refers to or affects only a small group of persons, for in France nearly every one has a bit of literary culture, and every one is more or less directly—much more directly than in the United States—under the influence of the spirit which dominates the literary productions.

J. K. Huysmans, a novelist, called a great artist by many critics, published in 1892 a novel entitled "*A Rebours*" ("Turned around" or "Upside down"). It relates the life of des Esseintes, a Parisian gentleman; perhaps the author's own life with a little added relief. In the following *résumé* of the book, we shall follow as much as practicable its phraseology. The style, broken, rough, jerky, as the movement of an hysteric, intensely colored with a superabundance of strange words or strange combinations of words expressing some uncommon sensations, corresponds very well to the content of the book.

Des Esseintes was born of parents already affected by neurosis. He rapidly gets sick of the people with whom he is compelled to associate during his studies. He then seeks some palatable society among the men of letters. They, too, soon give him the nausea by their banality. Finally, after having tried divers milieux, "he understands that the world is mainly made up of swaggers and imbeciles." A single passion, woman, could have held him in spite of that universal disdain, but this passion, too, was used up. After having drunk to the last drop the illicit passions, "he came to practice the exceptional amours, the deviated joys." Then the end came; exhausted, his senses fell into lethargy. Impotency was approaching. Abominably tired of life, he withdrew at some distance from Paris, in a house furnished especially for the enjoyment of his satiated senses. There he sleeps during the day and is up during the night, for "the mind does not really get excited, and does not well crepitate except in the contact with darkness."

Days and days were spent in the choice of the colors of the furniture, of the carpets, of the draperies and tapestry. He wanted colors which would stand out in the factitious light of the lamps. Colors such as would give pleasure to weakened and nervous people whose sensual appetites need highly seasoned food. Orange, that irritating, diseased color, with its fictitious splendor, was finally decided upon for the dominating color; all the others were to blend with it.

Every part of the apartment was conceived to awaken in him vivacious and *bizarre* sensations. His dining-room simulated a steamer's cabin. Instead of windows, he had port-holes behind which an aquarium gave the illusion of the sea.

He did not want his bed-room simply rich and voluptuously comfortable; luxury is too insipid, and plain sensuality too vulgar. He desired to make of his chamber a monk-cell, but without the austere ugliness of these abodes of penitence and prayer. To conciliate these conflicting notions, "he arranged with gay objects a sad thing," or rather while preserving the natural ugly appearance of a cell, he contrived to give to the whole room a sort of elegant and distin-

guished air. Instead of a wash-stand, he made use of a piece of antique church furniture in the interior of which a urinal could find place; on it a prayer book remained in permanence. Only genuine church candles, reserved for the church services, were used in that room. One can easily imagine the *bizarre* sensations that such objects, put to such service in that pseudo-cell, would awaken.

The artificial appeared to Des Esseintes the distinguishing mark of man's genius. Nature has had its time; it has for good and all wearied, "by the disgusting uniformity of its landscapes and of its sky," the patient attention of the refined set. The moment has come when the artificial should be substituted to this "everlasting dotard." Des Esseintes praises himself with being an artist in all things. His literary preferences are for the writers of the Latin decadence. Lucan and Petronius are his favorites. Virgil is a vulgar pedant. However strange it may appear, our hero reads the church fathers, some of them at least. The Apologetic and the Treatise on Patience of Tertullien interest him. He reads with pleasure the Christian eloquence of Bourdaloue and of Bossuet, and also Pascal, whose austere pessimism and painful attrition go to his heart. It is useless to say that Barbey d'Aurévilly is among his friends, this wondrous cynic in whom bigotry is allied to sacrilegious impiety. Listen to his analysis of the charm of this diabolical union: "This state, so curious, does not consist only in wallowing in the excesses of the flesh it consists essentially in sacrilegious practices, in a moral rebellion, in a spiritual debauch, in an ideal Christian aberration; it resides also in a joy moderated by the fear of punishment. The strength of Sadisme [from the Marquis de Sade] lies then in the inobservance of the Catholic precepts, nay more, in the following of them inverted, in committing, in order to mock the Christ, the sins which he most expressly cursed:—the pollution of the cult and carnal orgy."

Des Esseintes cultivated and enjoyed every one of his senses. He had in a little closet a set of small liquor barrels; by a clever contrivance, he could combine at will the liquors in his mouth. Every one of them corresponded to the sound of some instrument. The dry curaso, per inst., corresponded to the clarinet, "whose song is sourish and velvety; the krummel, to the hautboy, whose sonorous timbre speaks with a twang; the kirsh-wasser blows furiously the trumpet; the gin and the whiskey break through the palate with their screaming bursts of sound." Through skillful experiments, he had acquired the ability of playing on his tongue "silent melodies, mute funeral marches; to perform in his mouth solos of peppermint, duos of vespetro and of rum," etc.

To pander to his sense of smell, he had had prepared perfumes with which he filled his apartments. It was now a rain of human essence, smelling of woman; then the scent of a manufacturer or of chemical products; at another time, he injected in the room an odor which he called essence of blooming fields.

It goes without saying that physical troubles accompanied this extravagant life. Hallucinations of smell and of hearing, noises of the arteries, a dry regular cough, followed upon each other; later came irrepressible vomiting. Death stared him in the face. The doctor ordered peptone anal injections. Des Esseintes could not help, in spite of the extremity to which he was reduced, congratulating himself on this event which crowned the artificial existence he had arranged for himself. It would be delicious, thought he, if, after health regained, one could continue this simple way of taking food. Instead of spreading the table, one would have simply to set

down upon it the magisterial instrument and, in less than the time necessary to say grace, the repast would be over and the annoying and vulgar drudgery of an ordinary meal would thus be avoided.

At the idea that to avoid death he must of all necessity go back to Paris, and live in the company of his fellowmen, Des Esseintes falls into the blackest despair. Man's society is utterly abhorrent to him. Under this calamity the hunger for faith, which had showed itself repeatedly previously, becomes tyrannical. "Now that he had to re-enter life, he would have liked to be able to compel himself to possess faith, to incrustate it in himself, to screw it down in his soul, in order to shelter it from all those arguments which shake and uproot it. For des Esseintes, faith is belief in the Roman Catholic church; his religious notions go no further. But the more he craved for it, the more did Christ delay its visitation." His upward flights were repeatedly crushed down by one or the other "of the cursed discoveries which have destroyed the religious edifice from top to bottom since two centuries." It occurred to him, per instance, that shameless merchants made the sacred host with potato fecula, "now God refuses to descend in fecula. That was an undeniable fact; in the 2d vol. of his Moral Theology, His Excellency the Cardinal Gousset had treated logically this question, and according to him, potato fecula was in no way a competent matter for the Holy Sacrament. That perspective of being constantly duped, even at the holy table, was not made to deepen weakly grounded beliefs; and, moreover, how can you conceive of an omnipotence which finds its manifestations arrested by a handful of fecula or a taste of alcohol?"

However ridiculous this argumentation, however farcical religious needs thus expressed and thus repulsed may appear, we have here the representation, more or less exact, of the religious state of a large class of intelligent persons in France. Religion to them is the Roman Catholic faith; outside of it there is no religion. And the Roman Catholic religion is a whole, no part of which is non-essential, no part of which can be detached without destruction of the whole. This conception is indeed the sign of a very primitive, or rather, of a very abnormal religious development. But it exists and testifies to the perverse notions which Roman Catholicism and moral corruption have diffused among the people.

In spite of all objections, des Esseintes sees more and more that the reasonings of pessimism are powerless to alleviate his misery and that the impossible faith in a future life alone would give him peace. In a moment of half morbid anguish he exclaims, thinking of the life he is to resume in the midst of society: "Alas! Courage fails me, and my heart heaves. Oh, Saviour, have pity on the Christian who doubts, on the unbeliever who desires to believe, on the convict of life who must embark alone in the night under a starless firmament." These are the last words of "A Rebours."

Let us pass now to one of the precursors of the literary school which inscribes on its banner "Décadents." Towards the middle of the century a writer already known as the translator of Edgar Poe, *Charles Baudelaire*, published a volume of poetry with this significant title, *Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). The time was fortunately not yet ripe for such productions. The volume aroused a tempest of indignation, and the author was prosecuted on the score of extravagant immorality.

It is to-day well-nigh impossible to talk French literature without at least mentioning Baudelaire. This is not the place to speak of his poetical talent; we are concerned only with his ideas and the moral

character of his works. Let it suffice to say that there has probably been no French poet who surpassed him in the powerful uses he made of the language. He fashioned a style which made possible the rendering of a series of things, of sensations and of effects unnamable and unknown before him. Every person who feels an artistic vocation believes it his duty and his privilege to admire his talent, whatever he may think of the author's moral nature. Baudelaire is the leader, and in some degree the source of inspiration of a large number of the most gifted artists in letters who came after him. He is the spring, where the literary youth craving for fame go and drink at their entrance in life. On account of that controlling influence, we have thought well to say a few words concerning him.

The whole of Baudelaire is in the *Fleurs du Mal*. The peculiar perfume which they exhale has no name. It is as a bouquet grown on a carrion, or, as some one has said, "an Eden of hell, where Death walks in company with Voluptuousness, her sister." The brilliant Théophile Gautier said, speaking of the book, "To give to the taste an unknown sensation is surely the greatest happiness (bonheur) that can fall to a writer, especially to a poet." Baudelaire has certainly had that joy. Another literary man exclaims, "You have lighted the artistic sky with a *rayon macabre*; you have created a new shudder." The same Gautier writes, "In order to depict these corruptions, he has found those morbidly rich tints of more or less advanced rot . . . those roses of phthisis, those whites of chlorosis, those bilious yellow, those poisonous metallic greens, stinking copper arsenate, . . ."

"L' Invitation au Voyage" is of an enchanting languor; it is as music to the ear, as a voluptuous caress to the flesh. In the land where he proposes taking his lady companion:

"There, nought but order, grace, is found,
And pleasure's calm voluptuous round."¹

In "La Cloche Fêlée" (the Cracked Bell), he compares himself to a bell tolling in the mist. "My soul is like a bell that's cracked, and when beset with cares, it fain would people with its songs the cold night airs. Not seldom its feeble and weak voice appears the rattle of some wounded one, forgotten and lone, who, beside a lake of blood, corpse-covered lies and dies, stirring not, amid a world of efforts." In his dedications, he does not forget Satan; to him he addresses litanies, beginning thus:

"O thou of angels all the fairest and most wise,
God by Fortune betrayed, bereft of eulogies,
O Satan, take compassion on my long distress!"

and this hideous supplication is repeated after every two verses:

"Adopted father thou, of those whom God has driven
In anger dark and fierce forth from the earthly heaven,
O Satan, take compassion on my long distress!"

He eulogizes the sterile woman, addresses his salutations to a certain "Queen of Sin," and delights in exciting descriptions of carnal feminine charms.

"Dear indolent, how fair a sight
Thy grace of body seems!
How like the stars' inconstant light,
Thy skin's soft gleams!"

¹ These translations from the *Fleurs du Mal* we owe to Dr. Chamberlain.

In his morbid malaise, lashed by unquenched desires, he exclaims: "No soul can fit a heart so deep and dark as mine but thine, Lady Macbeth, potent in crime and wrong." The following is an attempt at rendering perhaps the most strongly written sonnet in the French language. A sensitive nature could hardly read it in the original without remaining for long hours under its sinister impression.

SPLEEN.

"When the low-hanging sky like a dark cover weighs heavy on the groaning soul, a prey to griefs and cares, and, embracing the wide horizon's round, pours on us a day more dark, more sad than night,"

* * * * *

"When the earth is changed into a humid prison-cell, where hope flits to and fro like a poor bat, beating in aimless flight the walls with timid wing, striking its little head against the mouldering roof,"

* * * * *

"When huge trains of rain-drops in their fall mimic the bars of some vast dungeon, and a mute folk of horrid spiders cast and spin their webs deep in our brains,"

* * * * *

"Suddenly and furiously bells clash forth and fill the skies with frightful howls, resembling wandering, homeless spirits who in stubborn groans vent their long woes,"

* * * * *

"And through my brain moves the long procession of hearses, slowly, without the sound of music or of drum; hope, vanquished, weeps, and anguish, cruel and despotic, hoists her black flag over my prone head."

A few more words on the ideas of our poet. He was, it is useless to say after these quotations, a fatalist and a pessimist to the core of his heart. Progress, the great modern idea, was for him "an ecstasy of fly-catchers." "He held in profound horror philanthropists, utilitarians, humanitarians, and all those who pretend to change anything to the invariable nature and to the fatal organization of society." He loved the artificial, the after-touches made by art to nature. To a simple young girl, he preferred a ripe woman adorned with all the art of a learned coquetry.

His finely moulded nose, rather soft, with delicate palpitating nostrils, indicated well the subtlety of his sense of smell; "My soul hovers on perfumes as the soul of other men do on music," he used to say. One of his sonnets expresses beautifully his sensuality of smell:

CORRESPONDENCE.

"There are perfumes as fresh as little children's flesh,
Sweet as hautbois, green as the meadows,
And others, corrupt, rich and triumphant,
Having the expansion of infinite things
Like amber, musk, benzoin and incense,
That sing the transports of spirit and sense."

Charles Baudelaire died from paralysis. To-day a loud cry is raised by some persons asking that a statue be erected on a public place of Paris to this man whom justice prosecuted a few years ago.

SCHOOL OF THE DÉCADENTS.

But let us hasten further to the *School of the Décadents*. During the past ten or fifteen years a little group of blustering young men have caused a prolonged stir in France, and have drawn on them the attention of the public and of many of the literati by the eccentricity of their productions and of their theories. This movement is, it seems to me, highly interesting as marking the complete dissolution of all beliefs, of all restraints, of all rules, even of those rules which seem the most deeply rooted and the most necessary: French lassitude, French, or rather Parisian skepticism, no more a theoretical skepticism, but an assimilated skepticism, truly ruling and governing man, have no better example than this literary manifestation.

Some poetical talent is found among them combined with pretensions that call to mind the illusions of general paresis. *Baju*, e. g., in a pamphlet glorifying the Décadents, boldly declares that Naturalism has delighted those who are incapable of seeing and of feeling in any other way than by their senses. Naturalism is without ideas, it wallows in matter. To the Décadents was reserved the honorable task of crushing Naturalism and of creating a better taste, no more in contradiction with modern progress. He gives to the school a reformatory mission. "It attempts," says he, "to elevate the moral and intellectual level of the masses assailed by a deep disgust and an incurable spleen." This is no buffoonery; the writer is in dead earnest—or at least in as great earnest as he can be,—but he evidently is in the deepest confusion as to what morality is. He gives a satisfactory proof of this a little further, where he eulogizes Barbey d'Aurévilly, who so cleverly unites the sacrilegious to the holy. "Barbey d'Aurévilly is, if we believe Baju, the most colossal thinker of all ages. He is truly *the* writer of the century. Victor Hugo, who is held to be a giant, is nevertheless a dwarf by his side."—Enough of this.

What are the theories or the principles of the Décadents? They claim to be a school; they must hold some common doctrine, and so they do. Let me say, first, that the various men and the considerable literature generally named by this appellation, make up a heterogeneous mass without unity beyond a profound contempt for all received rules in the art of writing and a licentious refinement of sensations.

I transcribe two authorized passages containing their programme. One from *G. Kahn*: "We want to objectivate the subjective, viz., to project the idea instead of subjectivating the objective, which means nature seen through a temperament." The other from a poet: "We want to reach into the essence of nature, the manifestations of which glitter on the surface of things." Baju has a very clear idea of what the Décadent literature should be. "It takes up only what directly interests life," says he. "No description; we suppose all known. Simply a rapid synthesis giving the impressions of the objects. Do not depict, but make the reader to feel." But the most complete exposition of their method is found in the *Traité du Verbe* of René Ghil. It is a sort of rhetoric of Décadentisme. Unfortunately for the propagation of its contents, the pamphlet is generally unintelligible. It is written in a new language; the words are still, in parts at least, French words; but the sentences are constructed according to a syntax of their invention. The initiated only can perceive the new light concealed in that obscurity. Nevertheless I shall attempt, in due humility and diffidence, to give a *résumé* of the teaching of the *Traité du Verbe*.

First principle: use the *Symbol*, viz., do not stick close to reality, but extract from it its essence, that which moves us. Instead of making a long description of a beautiful landscape write simply a few words which will convey the total impression. The words need not be connected in any way, provided they give the desired sensation. Hear how well the poet succeeds in conveying the *impression*. This is the translation of the first strophe of one of his poems, called "The Blood at the Temples." I dare say that my translation is no more incoherent and no more obscure than the original.

"Alas! in the rugged dance, where trunks go naked in the manufacture thundering hard, loved rumors, for it we go, then, the rigid steam having you at both fists, Ô masses to the long flight, no more to waltz the waltz at the high supreme whirling?" A powerful imagination, not fettered by too much hard common sense, might find an interpretation to this poetry.

Second and last principle: use the *Verbal Instrumentation*. The vowels, as the musical instruments, have each their distinctive character. By a clever combination of the vowels and of the consonants, symphonies capable of awakening in us the most varied sensations can be produced. Our author has definitely determined, with an admirable precision, the musical correspondent of each letter. Moreover the vowels have also a color meaning. We reach thus the following table representing what René Ghil calls the Verbal Instrumentation. It is at bottom an extravagant system of imitative harmony or rather, of imaginary harmony.

F, l and s, correspond to the long, primitive flutes. L, r, s, z, correspond to the horn, bassoon and hautboy, etc. . . .

Ô, o, io, oi, give the reds. Oû, ou, iou, ouï, go from the black to the russet, etc. . . .

The a, o and in, are to be used to express magnitude, fullness and amplitude. E and i, for the tiny, the sharp, the sorrowful and mourning. O, r, s and x, for the great passion, for impetuosity, roughness, etc. . . .

Everything is clear and simple; and now, when a poet seized by inspiration is prompted to sing, he needs only open Ghil's Table and following it, combine vowels and consonants according to their indicated natural meaning, to express, with all their nuances and subtlety, whatever emotion may oppress his soul.

I cannot refrain from mentioning an attempt made at a Paris theatre to make use of these fanciful discoveries. M. Rounardo and Mme. Famen de Labrély have adapted the "Songs of Songs" of King Solomon to the stage. An actor dressed in yellow comes to the foot-lights and delivers his part, in which, through a happy choice of words, the same vowel, i per instance, recurs constantly. That vowel is supposed to suggest the color yellow (according to Rim-baut's color-alphabet, I think). Other declaimers, attired in garbs of divers colors, deliver speeches in which corresponding vowels dominate. The color-tone of the stage decoration changes to match with the artists and with the part of the piece being recited. Furthermore, to complete the harmony, a symphony in *re* is heard, and perfume of white violet is crushed to powder near the prompter's box while the speech in *i* goes on. The music and the perfume also change with the part recited. This was a very candid and logical attempt. It is not necessary to say that it did not meet with the success expected.

Paul Verlaine is claimed to be the greatest living representative of the *Décadents'* School. Some young literary men have almost

deified him in their frantic admiration. One of them called him the greatest thinker of all times. Physically Verlaine is a somewhat extraordinary being, with a Socratic profile, a forehead immoderately broad, and a skull covered with bumps. His life is full of obscure events: one day, for instance, he disappeared and for ten years remained hidden. Some said that he spent them in prison, others, in a hospital. Recently he published, after a long silence, a little volume of poems, *Wisdom*; but he still lives hidden, nobody knows where, possibly in the rear of some barkeeper's shop.

Les Poèmes Saturniens, *Les Fêtes Galantes*, *Jadis et Naguère*, *Romances sans Paroles* and *Sagesse*, are among his important works. Verlaine is not at all lettered; he uses the words after his own ways without caring for rules. He is sensitive as a child, and contrary to the assertion of his admirers, is a very poor thinker. His poetry expresses only sensations and feelings. It seems as if he was writing for himself alone, and in fact he is sometimes unintelligible. It is astonishing that such a reprobate can express feelings so sweet, so pure, that they seem to proceed from a virgin soul. Can this be artifice or refinement? Neither the one nor the other. This mild Decadent seems to have remained a child through life, or perhaps, after having tasted of all the pleasures of life, he returned to the primitive condition of his soul. *Sagesse* contains the effusions of a repentant sinner who returns to religion. Here the childish turn of mind of the poet shows itself plainly. One cannot conceive of a more ingenuous faith, of a humbler submission. He accepts without a question all mysteries and all dogmas of the Roman Catholic church. I wish I could translate here some of his inspired verses; but since time does not permit, we conclude with the opinion of Anatole France, expressed after the reading of *Sagesse*.

"Thou hast erred, but thou hast confessed thy sins. Thou wast an unfortunate man, but hast never lied. We are Pharisees; thou art the best and the happiest Paul Verlaine has written the most Christian verses which have appeared in France." But human nature is weak, and I fear that since this very Christian sentiment was uttered, the poet has given occasion to the Critic to repeat the proverb: "The sow that was washed returned to her wallowing in the mire."

Among the prominent Decadents we will further mention: *Stéphane Mallarmé*, professor of English, translator of Edgar Poe. He is, after Verlaine, the most talented of the Symbolists. Unhappily he is a great deal less intelligible than the latter.

Arthur Rimbaud, whose sonnet of the *Voyels* is famous.

Stuart Merrill, one of the few easily understood Symbolists. *Les Gammes* contains charming passages.

LITERARY CRITICS.

We are next to consider a group of writers less extravagant, but more important than the preceding; they may be taken as the representatives of the mass of the Parisian people. They are the famous literary critics, *Lemaitre*, *France* and *Sarcey*. Their influence is very great. By their daily articles they make or destroy reputations; they taboo or set in vogue a new book; they mould the taste of the people. They are, par excellence, men of the moment; they speak of the events of the day without an apparent thought for the morrow. They are the people's favorites because devoted to the people's pleasure.

But preliminarily let us cast a glance on the masters and educators of these men, to see from what lineage they have issued.

Among the philosophers we have *Renan* and *Taine*. "We place our title of nobility in this obstinate affirmation (the acknowledgment of duty); we do well, we must hold to it, even against evidence. But there is almost as much chance for the truth of the contrary." You have recognized the bewitching skeptic *Renan*. But you know him and so do you *Taine*, who said somewhere, "The best fruit of science is a stolid resignation, which pacifying and preparing the soul, reduces suffering to a bodily pain."

Among the pure litterateurs of whom our modern novelists and critics received their lessons and often their inspirations, we shall mention *Stendhal*, *Flaubert* and *Balzac*. These men are, all three, strong supporters of the doctrine of art for art's sake. Their criterion of the beautiful is their own sensations, their own taste; the possibility of its corruption does not occur to them; they do not know what corruption means. "As the beautiful and the useful have no point of contact, an artist must refrain from expressing his opinions on the things of this world," says *Flaubert*. His pessimism is as deep as the sky. "It is strange," says he, "with how little faith in happiness I was born. I had, when yet quite young, a complete presentiment of life. It was as a nauseating odor arising through the vent-hole of a kitchen. One need not have eaten of it to know that it causes vomiting." It is the same odor that escapes from *Flaubert's* great novels, and specially from *Madame Bovary*, the creator of the realistic novels. *Flaubert* died in 1880.

Stendhal is a little older (died 1842). A disciple of *Coudillac* and *Helvetius*, he is, as themselves, a sensualist and an ideologue. On the chapter of religion he is ferocious. "The only thing which excuses God," says he rabidly, "is that He does not exist." He is a modern by his sensibility, his analytical mind and his pessimism. He lacks only moderation in his skepticism to be completely of our day. The mellowing influence of a *Renan* had not yet softened that fierce negative dogmatism. His novels have had and have still a powerful influence. The most important of them are *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, *Le Traité sur l'Amour*.

In *Balzac*, the great author of the *Comédie Humaine*, nearly the same views, the same general dispositions are found.

Jules Lemaitre has been known for only about ten years. A pupil of the *École Normale*, he began his career as professor of rhetoric in provincial cities. In 1884 he abandoned pedagogy and went to Paris to make his fortune with his pen. He became a contributor to *La Revue Bleue* and to the *Figaro*, and a little later was appointed dramatic critic of the *Journal des Débats*. His chief literary studies have been published in five series under the title, *Les Contemporains*, and his dramatic criticisms in a series called *Impressions de Théâtre*.

M. *Lemaitre* is a kind hearted gentleman, often affectedly flip-pant, sometimes smacking of cynicism; his style is always easy and generally sprightly, picturesque and seasoned with delicate wit. Under his apparent unconcern and good humor, melancholy is discerned. His criticism is purely subjective. He gives his impressions with ingenuousness, regardless of their reflections on himself. As his intellect and his senses are remarkable for their refinement, his impressions are as subtle as they are complex and numerous. He has no dogmatic prejudices in art, nor in anything else; for if, to him, the measure of all things is himself, he knows well that men differ, and is ready to concede that anyone is about as near the truth as himself—if there be any truth. As M. *Lemaitre* never does violence to himself in order to be consistent, and as his supple intelligence sees things from multifarious points of view, it often happens, ac-

according to his moods and the changes of weather, that he flatly contradicts himself. But what does it matter? According to his subjective mood, is he not just as right in one case as in the other? Occasionally he wittily asks the reader to forget what he has just said, and proceeds to say the contrary.

The faith of our critic is very hard to define. He would willingly repeat these words of his master, ". . . . God, providence, immortality, as many good old words, a little heavy perhaps, to which philosophy will give a more and more refined interpretation."¹

Somewhere half playful, half sadly serious, he makes up a creed. I paraphrase it: "I believe that humanity progresses towards an ideal where justice shall be more perfect, suffering less intense and truth better known. I believe that all men are conjointly responsible, and that we love each other as naturally as we love ourselves. I believe that our advantage and our pleasure are found in loving others, in working for those we love, and, beyond them, for the whole community, amen."²

The following betrays in an interesting way the moral state of literary France. Reviewing a book, Lemaitre says: "It is a beautiful book, and (let not the author take this for a lesser compliment), it is a good book." Our good Lemaitre knows that it is so little the custom to give to the good the priority on the beautiful that he feels it necessary to say that such is his opinion.

Speaking of the remarkable book of Edouard Rod, *Le Sens de la Vie* (The Meaning of Life), and referring to a vigorous page on the noxious effects of dilettanteism, our critic thinks "that it was worth the while to describe that evil, if it were only to make us ashamed of it and to incite in us the desire of shaking it away and of passing from the books to active life," but a little further he adds, "And yet, everything being considered, it is to me extremely difficult to be persuaded that dilettanteism is in itself injurious, and I almost feel disposed to take its defense."

He quotes frequently from the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. He is acquainted with St. Augustine and makes use of his pious sayings. Often for half a page or more, it seems that you are reading a book of devotion. "To love God," says he, "is to love the human soul, aggrandized with the joy of enlarging it unceasingly, and to measure our own value by that growth." Sometimes about a new drama he shows himself austere and speaks humbly but strongly in the defense of outraged virtue. In all this he is perfectly sincere. It is one part of his double nature which speaks in such occasion; for, like every one of us, he is double and he differs from the common only in a greater instability. He allows his other self to express itself just as freely: "Everything well considered, there are three lives worth living: the life of the man who dominates over the other men, through holiness or through political and military genius (Francis of Assisi and Napoleon); the life of the great poet who gives representations of things more beautiful than the things themselves and just as interesting (Shakespeare and Balzac); and the life of the man who conquers and enslaves all the women he meets on his way (Richelieu and Don Juan). This last destiny is not the least glorious, nor the least to be envied." The reader does not fail to see that it is the destiny which M. Lemaitre would choose for himself, if the choice were in his power—for a part of his sojourn on earth at least, for our delicate critic would not willingly make himself inapt to taste the sweetness of Christianity. Do you ask why? First, because "the religious curiosity, is in our

¹ Ernest Renan.

² *Les Contemporains* (Rod), 5^e Série.

century, one of the most distinguished and one of the best of our sentiments," and secondly, because the gospels have "I do not know what deep charm, mystic and vaguely sensuous." "The modern soul consults all the gods, not to believe in them, . . . but to understand and venerate the dreams which the engima of life has inspired in our ancestors and the illusions which have alleviated their sufferings." This sounds like Renan.

The best and perhaps the most constant part of M. Lemaitre is his compassion, his pity. I remember having read somewhere a statement of his meaning that he would rather die than willingly cause pain to anyone.

In M. Jules Lemaitre dilettanteism has achieved its wretched work. He has no more character, he is hardly a personality, he is but an intelligence, so subtle and so fluid that it seems ready to fall into thousands of disconnected particles. Of will, habit, inertia, he has little or none.

Anatole France, in addition to literary reviews and critics, collected (the best of them) in five volumes under the title *La Vie Littéraire*, has published a number of valuable novels; *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*, *Le Livre de mon Ami*, *Balthazar*, are the most important.

The following portrait from his pen shows his moral attitude: "Jules Lemaitre is a very wise and very subtle person, whose happy perversity consists in doubting incessantly. That is the state to which thought has reduced him. . . . Thought is an awful thing . . . M. Lemaitre has no doctrine, but he has a moral philosophy. This philosophy is bitter and sweet, indulgent and cruel and most of all, kind . . . sometimes ascetic and sometimes sensual."

With these two writers, Lemaitre and France, must be associated their colleague, *Francisque Sarcey*, known only by his criticisms. His authority may be judged from the fact that he receives 80,000 francs a year for his weekly chronicle in *Le Temps*.

The first of this trio can be taken as representing the others, so that we shall pass further after the following quotation taken from A. France: "His book (*Mensonges*, a novel of Paul Bourget), in which the inimitable voice of truth is heard, induces despair. Its taste is more bitter than death. It leaves ashes in the mouth. It is why I have gone to the spring of life; it is why I have opened the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* and read the salutary words, "*But we do not want to be saved; we fear, on the contrary, to be deprived from the voluptuous pleasure of going to perdition. The best among us are as Rachel, who did not want to be comforted.*" The attitude of the group of men we are studying could not be better expressed.

CHRONICLERS.

The Parisian newspapers are much less voluminous than those of the large cities of the United States. In them the most interesting events of the past day, social and political, the public rumors, gossips, etc., are brought together in a tasteful and sprightly chat called the *Chronicle*. The Chronicle is the most read because, to the large mass of the people, the most interesting part of the paper. The chroniclers, for the best papers, are men of talent, clever to please and enjoying a great popularity and a corresponding influence. This forces them on our attention. We shall say a few words concerning four of them, *Albert Wolff*, *Emile Blavet*, *Henri Fouquier* and *Rochefort*.

MM. Wolff and *Blavet* write for the *Figaro*. The first "knows, for the joy and the edification of the people, how to appear in the

same time flippant and serious, boulevardier and moralist, the gentleman who understands all, but who, nevertheless, respects that which must be respected, the gentleman without prejudices of any kind, but, nevertheless, having principles."

M. Blavet knows also exactly what the reader wants of him. Lemaitre says that "he has the gift of catching with agility the fugitive traits of the daily comedy, to amuse himself with it and to amuse others. Not a shadow of pretension, a very philosophical good will; at bottom an absolute indifference. This one is a Parisian."

Henri Fouquier writes for the *Gil Blas*. He is more original than the two preceding writers. He is the most distinguished of the Parisian chroniclers. "The mind, the most easy, the most alert, the most skillful, the most ready in all things . . . He reproduces on the run the most recent way of understanding and of seeing which men have found, as if he knew it from all eternity." His fort is woman. That should be the strong point of every Parisian chronicler, for, as one of them said, "Woman is that which fills the greatest room in man's life." You will be able to lay hold of his morals in the following quotation on love: "Here is the simple fact to which I want to arrive: there is no social morals, there is only a worldly free-masonry, absurd, with cruel and sanguinary rites against which our heart and our reason protest. To seek the law of the world is truly a folly; there is nothing left to do but to submit to it. That free-masonry holds that a young girl who gives herself for a bouquet of roses is lost, while a married woman who gives herself in a caprice or for a bracelet is not on that account dishonored, provided she plays the hypocrite." These, and the like, are the ideas which M. Fouquier develops for the readers of both sexes and of all ages of the great daily *Gil Blas*.

But little variation is perceived as we pass from one to the other of the chroniclers. It is about the same type. It is interesting to notice that the talents which distinguish them are those more naturally belonging to woman: a marvelous gift of receptivity, a great elegance of language, a fine sensibility and a powerful intuition.

As to *Henri Rochefort*, the publisher of *La Lanterne* (a daily paper), he is a unique being. Lemaitre finds him "a most interesting and, at the same time, most irritating moral case on account of the impossibility of seeing clearly to the bottom of it . . . For the past twenty years his hisses have been heard without interruption on the public place. The empire fell under the noise of his rattle, and since then it has never ceased grinding for a single day. The spirit of Rochefort is uninterrupted, methodical and universal irony. One feels very clearly that the secret source of this raillery is not, as is the case of other great scoffers, the love of the truth, of the just or of the beautiful. His raillery attacks every subject; be it a ridiculous thing or an infamous one, the same methodical sneer disposes of it."

Rochefort is a factor in the political world. He is a deputy to the Legislative Chamber. There he defends what he calls the cause of the people, not that he loves them—that does not appear—but because under that mask of defender of the oppressed he finds the means of best satisfying his hatred and his need of destroying. He was the ally of General Boulanger.

¹ Les Contemporains, Jules Lemaitre.

The bloody period of the French Revolution known by the name "Terror" had such men. A society which not only produces such monsters but tolerates them, not only tolerates them, but honors them with a seat in its Legislative body, a society which supports and applauds to the perverse turpitude of a political newspaper inspired by such madmen, may not be far from anarchy.

The novelist, *Maurice Barrès*, poses as the representative of his generation, and many take him seriously. He is still quite young, but as *Corneille* said :

Chez les âmes bien nées,
La valeur n'attend pas le nombre des années.

His numerous admirers compare him to Descartes and to Spinoza. Indeed he reads Spinoza.

The only reality which he recognizes is the *Ego* and its sensations. There is nothing real under the words truth, justice. The *Moi* is all; there is nothing beyond. Maurice Barrès has then a very exalted idea of the *Ego*; it represents the conscience of the race; it is a link in an immortal chain. The *Culture du Moi* is the business to which we should all give ourselves; everything, sensations and emotions, are made to help the realization of our being. Laws are iniquitous, for the only reason of life is the free development of the *Moi* by sensations. Laws are a slavery that dead generations inflict on the present generations; a tyranny of the senseless dead on the living who feel and suffer. To regenerate society, it would be sufficient to put all the *Egos* in liberty by abolition of all the laws.

With ideas so profound and so wise, M. Barrès has not had to wait long the honor of representing a part of his country in the Chamber of Deputies.

He developed the ideas here summarily set forth in four books: *Sous l'Oeil des Barbares*, *Un Homme libre*, *L'Ennemi des Lois*, *Le Jardin de Bérénice*.

II. THE TORMENTED.

We arrive, in our survey of modern French literature, to a goodly number of talented men, brought up under the influence of the Flaubert, the Baudelaire, the Renan, the Taine, men who more or less earnestly wrestle against the sensualism and the dilettanteism they have inherited and cultivated in their youth, and who aspire to some faith to guide them to the ideal. In their best moments they throw out the cry of deep distress which a journalist recently uttered: "We have no chapel where we can kneel down, no more faith to sustain us, no more God to whom we can address our prayer. Our hearts are empty, our souls are without an ideal and without hope You, who have the good fortune of believing in a Sovereign-ruler, entreat him to reveal himself to us, for we long to suffer and to die for a faith."¹

We have seen these same desires, less warmly felt indeed, in many of the writers we have mentioned, in Huysman, who points out faith and religion as the only remedy to the woes of his hero, in Lemaitre, and in France. We know that in all times some restless people have spent their life seeking in anguish some peace-giving panacea. But the *Mal du siècle* to-day bears a particular stamp. It is deeper and larger, it is no more vague, immatured and unexplained as in the time of Musset and of Lamartine. It is no

¹ From *Le Christianisme au XIX. siècle*.

more a mere soaring up towards a mystical ideal; the evil is, it seems, fathomed; its remedy is known.

Everywhere, in the daily papers, in the reviews, in the novels, in poetry, even in science and philosophy, traces of a new spirit are found. About two months ago Madame Adam, directress of the *Nouvelle Revue*, invited M. Raoul Pictet, the well-known physicist from Geneva, now professor at the Berlin University, to deliver the inaugural address at the opening of a new lecture hall in Paris. Before a chosen audience of men of letters and of savants, the scientist related his evolution from the materialistic theory of the universe to the spiritualistic conception. The conclusion of the discourse is well worth repeating, coming from such a man: "After having admitted first the notion of ponderable matter, then that of ether, later the notion of actual movement and then that of potential movement, contemporary science is compelled to recognize still another force, a soul-power, in order to satisfactorily understand the observed and observable facts. Experimental physics demonstrates that morality is possible, that duty and free will can be affirmed and, consequently, that men can escape from the mechanical determinism without upsetting the order of the universe."

The French know no more how to poke fun at religion; on the contrary, they wish for it. Even clericalism comes to be looked upon graciously; the famous exclamation of Gambetta, "Clericalism, that is the enemy," is no more heard. A few months ago the minister of public instruction, Bourgeois, against all precedent, appointed an abbey as director of an important Lycée at Nancy, if we mistake not. The press comments were on the whole complimentary. In the schools the questions of religious faith are not discarded *a priori*. The students are ready to listen. The possibility of an intervention quasi-miraculous of the divine is more frequently admitted. The psychological studies have no doubt been a factor in this evolution and especially the mysterious revelation of hypnotism, telepathy and those of spiritualism. Many expect psychology to throw a bridge between positivism and transcendentalism.

Idealistic novels become more numerous. Lately the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* (1890) published a novel entitled "*Ni Dieu ni Maître*" (No God nor Master), by George Duruy, professor at the university, whose theme is the conversion of a physician free thinker. Again here the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* is quoted at length. Noël Blache presented to the readers of the *Nouvelle Revue* (December, 1892) a man of the world, a Parisian boulevardier, and led him to the brim of Christian conversion. In the last chapter the writer places these words in the mouth of his hero: "I feel it now, there is in life something else than race horses, opera women, clubs and the like." He nevertheless continues the same life, for he is unable to shake off his habits. He excuses himself by repeating despondently the old proverb: "Qui a bu boira" (He who has drunk, shall drink again).

Two young poets have recently published songs of hope. One of them, Albert Jounet, in two volumes of verses, *L'Etoile Sainte* and *Les Lys Noirs*, gives himself up to religious inspiration. The other, Emile Trolliet, issued a volume of poems with a prelude dedicated to M. de Vogüé, and a piece entitled *Relèvement*, addressed to M. Paul Desjardins.

A group of young men striving for a literary career has lately founded la *Revue Libre*, a small publication of considerable merit. In it can be found striking examples of the transitory moral

stage, characterized by the new-born mysticism in which sensuous love and spiritual love meet and pass into each other.

Pierre Lasserre, a young author, attempts in *la Crise Chrétienne* to analyze and reduce to their just value the new aspirations with which so many of his countrymen are agitated.

But most significant, perhaps, among the numerous signs of a new orientation is the recent choice made by the General Association of the Paris Students for their president. The election carried to that influential position M. Henri Béranger, a talented young man in sympathy with the neo-Christian movement. In a speech to his fellow-students we find this sentence, "Let us seek to be imbued with the spirit of Christ." A few months ago he gave to the public a novel, *l'Effort*. It is the voice of one who has suffered, warning his brothers and his sisters. The evil of the present resides, in the author's opinion, in the abuse of thought, in the spirit of analysis. He designates it by the term *intellectualisme*, "that perversion of the mind which reduces us to seeking in life only the spectacles of life, and in sentiments only the ideas of sentiments." Intellectualism destroys intuition, that deep primitive impulse of the soul which is the natural spring of action, and in so doing brings about the dryness of soul and the moral inertia of which France is dying. Even love, the deepest and most essential sentiment, the essence of the soul, is extinguished.

The book is written in the form of a novel. A Georges Lauzerte, the personification of intellectualism, is led to a suicide. Contrasted with him is his friend, Jean Darnay, the man who finds in the intuition of his conscience the source of a saving activity. Duty, for M. Béranger, is one with love, for we know duty only through impulses. So that duty should not be separated from love.

"I give nothing as duties :
What others give as duties, I give as living impulses;
Shall I give the heart's action as duty?"¹

The persons familiar with the spirit of the Paris students of a few years ago, will see in the election of M. H. Béranger as president of the Students' Association the proof of a wondrous change.

Mark, if you please, that the transformation we have pointed out is not due to the intervention of exterior influences; it is not the fruit of the admonitory appeals of those who have remained untainted by the evils of the period, nor is it due to the teachings of the church. The patient himself has found in his condition the reason of a new course of life. We have here a beautiful case of the normal workings of nature: a society having wandered away from true human life in the process of readjusting itself to the laws of life under the incentive of the moral disturbance consequent upon an anti-natural existence.

If, from the preceding general indications, we pass to the group of men we have more especially designated by the term tormented, we find some poets, *Sully Prudhomme* and *Maurice Bouchor*; at least one dramatist, *Alexandre Dumas, fils*; some novelists, *Paul Bourget* and *Edouard Rod*. Other names might be added, but these men illustrate sufficiently well the various aspects of the *états d'âmes* to which we desire to draw your attention. In these five men, however they may differ in their self-consciousness, or in their manner of manifesting their moral disquiet, at bottom the same conflict, arising from the same aspirations by the same grievous tendencies, is distinctly perceived.

¹ From Walt Whitman, as quoted by M. H. Béranger.

Sully Prudhomme of the French Academy, author of *les Epreuves, les Solitudes, les Destins, la Justice, le Bonheur*, etc., is a poet-philosopher. He began long ago with philosophical poems, full of enthusiasm and of confidence, in which he preaches action and censures egoistical despair. Since then his voice has grown more harmonious, but also more tormented; he speaks long-felt miseries. The aspirations toward the infinite, the smallness of man before the starry vault of heaven, the anguish of doubt, are the themes to which he constantly recurs. Often he rises on the wings of hope, never on those of faith. In the beautiful stanzas, entitled "*le Vœu*" (the Vow), he exclaims in a burst of passionate compassion for unhappy mortals:

"Du plus aveugle instinct je me veux rendre maître,
Hélas! non par vertu, mais par compassion.
Dans l'invisible essaim des condamnés à naître,
Je fais grâce à celui dont je sens l'aiguillon."

In opposition to the theory of art, for art's sake, stands the playwright, *Alexandre Dumas, fils*, also member of the Academy. In his estimate, "All literature which does not have in view the perfectibility, the moralization, the ideal—in a word, the useful, is an unwholesome literature." Every one of his tragedies or comedies is a moral thesis, whose theme is nearly always woman, her moral nature, the rôle she plays and the rôle she should play in society, adultery, that sentimental and elegant prostitution received as a poetical weakness. Society receives the announcement of a new piece of Dumas about as the church-going public of New York receives the information that such a well-known preacher is going to deliver a sermon on the social evil.

Let us find from his writings the ideas on love and on woman of this would-be reformer. The relation of the sexes is for him *the* social question; all others are subordinate. The world revolves around sexual love. Lewdness, the seeking after voluptuousness is the great, the only great danger of the present. He often agrees with Schopenhauer. I doubt not that the German philosopher is responsible for a part of the utterly disrespectful notions of the academicien concerning woman. "True love is a very rare thing, rare as true genius, as true virtue, as everything that is true. Many are called to it, but few are chosen." Marrying is only making the best of the worse. Marriage, says he in a sally, is a means of transportation, the omnibus which conveys us to the end of our life's journey. The passengers are tossed about, shaken up, vexed and annoyed in many ways, but better suffer the less in the coach than experience the fatigue of walking and running the risk of losing oneself in a roadless country. In the preface to *l'Ami des Femmes*, he draws a very dark portrait of woman. "Woman is a circumscribed being, passive, a disposable instrument in perpetual expectation. She is the only incomplete work which God has allowed man to take up and to finish. She is a riffraff creature. . . . Woman will no more be a wife, a companion, a friend, a slave, a victim of modern society; she is first of all an adversary. . . . There is no family in the civilized world which, at this hour, has not to defend itself against this insurgent, woman." On the question of emancipation, Dumas becomes highly entertaining: "Independently of man, woman does not act, she flutters. . . . The emancipation of woman by woman is one of the most exhilarating jollities which ever came to life. It is pure nitrous protoxyde; uncorking suddenly, the flask would set God laughing for eternity." I quote these buffooneries to point out the tone of

this stage-moralist. One of his elements of success will now appear more clearly.

M. Alex. Dumas tells us somewhere how he became a moralist: "One could not have, unless he be crazy, the pretension of achieving all alone a general reform; it is probable that this reform must advance gradually. So that a person willing the good will chose any one of the numerous points at which the symptoms of the quasi universal imbecility manifest itself, and, directing his attention to it, will make it his point of attack." Our playwright chose woman, and took upon himself the mission of reforming society through her. The theatre became his battle-ground, and since that early day he has not ceased writing and writing with a *brio*, an abundance of animal spirit and of wit, truly bewildering.

You have not failed to notice in the last quotation the term "symptoms of quasi universal imbecility." Here, again, the point of view of our moralist is apparent. Do not these words indicate, what is felt through the whole of his work, that his intelligence much more than his conscience, or his heart, is galled by the folly of man? No moral reformer ever subsisted on intellectual sentiments. Nevertheless some have awarded him the title of spiritual director of this century. This shows only how much France needs a spiritual director.

It cannot be doubted that Alex. Dumas is in earnest, but it is not the earnestness of a person conscious of moral evil. There is in him too much blustering, too much fondness for scenic effect, and too little hatred of sin. In truth, he is not enough of a saint to reform anything or any one. The public will enjoy his brilliancy and his daring and often immodest wit, but will not go further. Alex. Dumas is a sort of modern literary Don Quixote.

In the poet *Maurice Bouchor*, we witness the moral evolution through which so many young Frenchmen pass.

At the early age of 18 (in 1874), Maurice Bouchor published *les Chansons Joyeuses* (the Joyful Songs), a work full of freshness, of unconcern, overflowing with life. They are bacchic songs, love lyrics, poems celebrating the Goddess Nature, and the like. Christianity is cursed, for the young man is a thorough materialist. His Bible is Lucretius' poem; his god is science.

A few years later *les Poèmes de l'Amour et de la Mer* appeared. Sensuous love, strangely entwined with mystic aspirations, gives the tone to this volume.

In the meantime the reckless, unconcerned youth has met with the great problem of life. In the preface to *les Symboles*, he retraces his moral transformation: "Having understood," says he, "that the doctrine in which I saw the truth was devised to debase my mind and to narrow my heart, . . . it became clear to me that if I wanted to increase my intellectual pleasure, nothing, not even virtue, should remain indifferent to me." Under the impulse of this desire he turned towards ideal justice, "but," continues our poet, "the good faith of my master¹ took hold of me, and I became transformed in contact with this sound and robust soul." The facts of moral consciousness had asserted their authority. In search of light he went back to the gospels, and understood better their spirit. The idea of God absorbed all his thoughts. At this time he perceived the limitation of science and its incapacity for satisfying his most imperative and noblest aspirations. Anguishing doubts beset him, which neither religion nor metaphysics was able to silence.

¹ Proudhon.

During this long period of inward struggles, M. Bouchor writes his third book, *l'Aurore* (Dawn), in which he vents in passionate verses, often frightful in the intensity of their anguish, the torments of his soul. The true cause, or at least the chief cause, of his moral condition is revealed in the two first parts of the book, "la Chair (The Flesh), "la Lutte" (The Struggle). It is not essentially intellectual; it is sensual. The flesh, lust, devours him; in vain his soul, longing for purity, wrestles with his unbridled senses. We dare say that here is the cradle of the greatest part of French pessimism. In order to believe in an ideal world, the idea must triumph in oneself. When the flesh governs the mind, it becomes for it the only reality. Listen to him addressing his mistress:

"Let me die with bliss in the enjoyment of the present,
Eat my heart, drain my veins: again, do it again;
Plunge me whole in an immense joy
That in thy embrace, I may feel my soul die."

And elsewhere:

"I want to clasp thee with shrieks of delight,
And in a caress fit to wake up the dead,
I want to encircle thee around my prey."

A little further:

"Provided I see thee, touch thee, feel thee,
All else is indifferent to me;
The world is naught away from thy arms."

After satiety, regret and black despair seize him:

"Nothing is left me but to wring my hands,
And to cry as a child.—Courage I have lost.
I am whirled, rolled, swept away by the storm
As a dead leaf through the autumn fields."

At another place he exclaims:

"I do not love thee with my brain; it is the beast which adores thee; it is the maddened flesh, and my heart fails to silence my body."

The sorrow is as bitter as the passion is violent.

The last part of the book is calmer and more melancholy. He has fought so hard that he seems to have mastered his lustful desires. The poet thinks he perceives the dawn of a new day, and he pours himself out in mystical effusions, in which the love of the creature, the love of nature and the love of God are strangely blended; he hopes that "that uncertain, misty dawn will be followed by the light of a shining faith." But this hope was not realized, says he, in the preface already cited.

Where did the evolution of the poet stop? Here is, in his own words, the conclusion he reached:

"Religions express symbolically truths which language cannot directly utter, but these truths themselves appeared to me the far-removed images of a reality which I adored without knowing. The most ideal part of every belief was, in my eyes, as a veil which allowed the passage of but a scanty portion of the divine light; it is why, desiring to group in my book the greatest part of these pious reveries, I called it *les Symboles*.¹ After a fruitless search and certain deviations from the religious sentiment, weary of vacillating between contradictory systems, I came to a purely human and moral conclusion."

¹ The name of Maurice Bouchor's last volume of poetry. He attempts in it to resuscitate the spirit of the antique religions.

Paul Bourget.—We feel embarrassed before this very complex nature. To give in a few minutes an adequate idea of one of the most subtle and complicated products of modern French civilization, in his various aspects and in his moral evolution, is no easy task. We beg your indulgence for this insufficient effort.

No man perhaps represents so completely as Paul Bourget the various tendencies, good and bad, and the peculiar psychic states which we have met with in the preceding notes. In him is found the synthesis of the perplexing *états d'âmes* of his generation. I desire to draw your attention specially on the gradual transformation which seems to have removed him from the side of the negatives to the side of the positives.

Twelve years ago Paul Bourget was unknown; today fame has carried his name in every civilized land. We find in him a poet: his first publications, *la Vie Inquiète* (Restless Life), *Edel, les Aveux* (The Confessions), are poetry; a critic: the *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, 2 vols., and *Études et Portraits* have conquered for him a distinct place as a literary critic; a novelist. On his novels rests our author's fame among the great public; to the few who desire to see deeper into the fabric of his soul, the *Essais* and the *Études et Portraits* are Bourget's most interesting works. In them, in some passages of his earlier, and in many of his latter works, the reader finds himself in contact with a strong, disciplined and acute intelligence, with a philosopher seeking relations of cause and effect; while in his poetry, and in a considerable part of his novels, he appears as a mincing, feminine, elegant gentleman, very subtle and very sweet. A female sensibility and a male intelligence, is the first paradox which perplexes the reader. The knowledge of this duality may serve as a key to the understanding of his personality.

Love is his favorite theme, at least in the first part of his career. No one ever unraveled better the mysterious complexity of a feminine heart; the contradictions, the unconsciousness, the instinctiveness of fair humanity were never searched with so much acumen; no woman ever showed so much delicate refinement in the portraying of a heroine's toilet, of her boudoir, or of the furniture of a parlor.

The *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* is a collection of about a dozen *essais*, on as many men, whom the author conceives to have been the introducers of new forms of sensations and of thoughts. Notice the word "psychology" in the title. Bourget does not call himself a critic, but a psychologist, and this correctly, for he does not discuss talents or artistic theories; he analyzes minds. He does not depict and criticise; he attempts to set forth the internal processes which determine action, to unfold a soul, and to show its influence. The form, the exterior, draws his attention only in so far as it reveals the inner man. By the use he made of that psychological method, Paul Bourget became the leader of a new literary school called *l'école psychologue*. His purpose in these *Essais* is to show how the literature of to-day influences and moulds the ideas of the men of tomorrow. "My ambition," says he, in the preface, "has been to draw up some notes that will be of some use to the historian of the moral life during the second half of the nineteenth century." The author's point of view is subjective. He chooses the men who have been his initiators, and he sets forth mainly those special characteristics of each which have influenced him. But in thus studying those men from the point of view of his own experience, he really stands as the representative of a large portion of the cultured French of the present generation.

Since his endeavor in the *Essais* is to trace the influence of the literature of the middle of the century on the men of today, Bourget must take in consideration the laws of psychic life underlying the principles of ethics. I do not think it would be correct to represent him as concerned with morality because it is a question involved in the studies contained in the *Essais*, but rather the *Essais* owe their existence to his deep and constant sensibility to good and evil. I call your attention to this fact as one of the fundamental elements of Paul Bourget's personality. None of his books has yielded his deepest meaning if this be neglected in its interpretation. His novels are dramas of the conscience. His heroes wrestle consciously or unconsciously with the moral instincts. When A. France goes to the Imitation of Jesus Christ after reading *Mensonges*, it is to ease the intense sadness caused in him by the conflict of sense and conscience as depicted by the novelist. Exaggerating a little, one could say that the groans of a soul subjugated by the sensuous passions are heard arising from every page. In this Bourget is again a psychologist, for how can we conceive of a true psychologist who is not a moralist? Are not moral questions questions of life and death?

L'Irréparable is the story of a young girl who dies from shame and remorse after a pollution.

Cruelle Enigme sets forth the weakness of the spirit in conflict with the flesh; that is the cruel enigma.

The theme of *Crime d'Amour* (Love Crime) is the expiation and purification through moral sufferings, followed by reconciliation.

Mensonges relates the fatal *desillusion* of a young poet suddenly thrown, by his first success, into a luxurious and elegant society. It is the tragic conflict of the ideal with the reality.

These novels produce a painful and a depressing effect. A sensuous thrill and a longing for a spiritual ideal, simultaneously awakened in the reader, clash together and create a most painful emotional state. We conceive the author to be in the moral condition which his novels induce. Without ceasing to surrender himself again and again to the greedy claims of his refined senses, he cannot free himself from the besetting presence of his higher self. The ideal follows him. Hence the duality of his novels; hence their sadness and their pathos. The complaint of Bourget, as of all these tormented men; the complaint of *des Esseintes* of Lemaitre, of Rod, of Bouchor, of Sully Prudhomme, etc., is more or less distinctly that of St. Paul. "For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Another fact worthy of attention is the little share that pure intellect has in Bourget's novels. Their author appears to move in the world of the feelings; he is a psychologist of the heart rather than of the head. His instrument of comprehension is *sympathy*. When he dissects an action, it is by means of the logic of the feelings. Facts exist for him only in their emotional concomitants. This is, indeed, one of the striking generalizations resulting from a study of modern French litterateurs: nothing interests them, nothing moves them, nothing is worth noticing, nothing exists for them save objects of feeling. Shall we not see in this phenomenon presented by an old sceptical civilization unfettered by convention or by tradition, the demonstration of the impotency of pure thought as a direct spring of action, and the fundamental importance of the feelings? The wonderful subtlety, the remarkable intelligence of the men we have reviewed, has its basis in an exquisitely delicate nervous system, reacting emotionally to facts which leave the vulgar unmoved.

In his first phase, Bourget is a negative, a sceptic, a dilettante, a pessimist. I quote from the *Essais*: "Only a prejudice in which reappear the antique doctrine of final cause and the belief in a definite purpose in the universe, can induce us to regard as natural and wholesome the amours of Daphne and Chloe in the dale, and as artificial and unwholesome the amours of a Baudelaire in the boudoir he describes." He admits the decaying state of France, but adds: "If the citizens of a decadence are inferior as workers for the grandeur of a country, are they not very superior as artists of the interior of the soul?" Notice, if you please, that this is said in a chapter on Baudelaire, with direct reference to that poet. A superior being is for him some one who discovers some new mode of thinking or of feeling. Ch. Baudelaire and E. Renan are both superior beings, because "by digging deep into their heart, they have invented two ways, until then unknown, of practicing, the first, debauchery, the second, dilettanteism. They have told their new dreams of the voluptuousness of the flesh and of the spirit in very bold pages, which have awakened in analogous and less personal souls tempting curiosities." There is here absolutely no thought of anything beyond art.

In the *Nouveaux Essais de Psychologie*, published later, moral scepticism seems to have lost ground. The mysticism already visible in some parts of his first studies is here more accentuated. He seeks a remedy to the "immortal nostalgia of the heart," and he perceives that the avowal of the heart's cravings is an open door on mysticisms, that it is the admission that there are intuitive truths which science cannot give us.

We have alluded two or three times to an evolution in the life of Paul Bourget. *Le Disciple* is perhaps the first clear indication of it. This novel, generally held to be the master-piece of Bourget, is the story of a young man who is led to perpetrate a crime by the logical deductions he made from the teachings of the determinist philosopher, Adrien Sixte. Its thesis is the responsibility of the teacher for the act of the pupil. It is a strong and pathetic appeal to the hoard of writers of all kinds who have so large a share in the education of youth. The author appears to have finally come to the full realizations of the vicious influence that such men as Renan, Taine, Baudelaire, Stendhal, etc., whom he revered and admired, have exercised on him, and, seized by the idea of the danger to which the young men, his brothers, are exposed, he throws out a passionate cry of warning. Listen to him addressing, in the preface, the young men to whom he dedicates his book. After having described two types of men, the one who at 25 years of age is a "calculating machine at the service of a machine for pleasure," the other very much alike to the author himself as he appears in his first works, he proceeds as follows: "Be neither one nor the other of these young men, thou, my brother! Let neither the pride of life nor the pride of intelligence make of you a cynic, a juggler with ideas! In our time of troubled conscience and of contradictory doctrines, cling to the word of Christ as to the saving branch; 'the tree must be judged by its fruit.' There is a reality of which you cannot doubt, for you possess it, you feel it, it is part of your life, it is your soul. Among the ideas which assail you, there are some which decrease the soul's power to love and to will. Hold for certain that those ideas are wrong in some particular, however subtle they may appear to you, however talented may be those of whom you receive them. Exalt in you these two great virtues, these two energies, outside of which there is nothing save present withering and final agony, *Love and Will*."

Unhappily the novel betrays the fact that the inspiring sentiments of the preface are, in part, only heart's desires, and have not yet become fast rooted in a character. Many a passage contained in it will not serve to exalt in the reader the two virtues without which there is but withering and ultimate death.

La Terre Promise (The Promised Land), published at the end of the past year, may be regarded as the first work of the second phase in the author's life. The dilettante palled with the dull realities of life; the sensualist moaning under the slavery of his passions; the sceptic playing indifference, has become a man of duty. He who delighted in the subtleties of the intellect, condemns now the refinements of elegance and the refinements of intelligence, as being incompatible with virtue. "Intelligence is negative; that is the brutal fact of which we must loyally acknowledge the certitude."

It might perhaps be said that the ethical worth of a man is measured by his views and habits respecting sexual relations, for sexual life is still more truly the centre of the moral than of the physical. Bourget, up to *la Terre Promise*, proceeded on the principle tacitly admitted by a large part of French society, that when a woman does not find in marriage the legitimate satisfaction of her heart, she is excusable if she gives herself to a man worthy of herself, in order to save from atrophy her best self. In that novel, Bourget breaks with this current morale. He perceives that he has been juggling on the brim of a precipice, and earnestly attempts to show the unavoidable degrading influence of all adultery, and the duties that such relations involve to the woman and to the possible offspring. *La Terre Promise* is the drama of paternity in adultery.

The skeleton of the novel is very simple. Ten years after having through ungrounded jealousy separated from his mistress, a married woman, Francis Nayrac meets a young girl of angelic purity, with whom he falls passionately in love. He has at last found the ideal for which he was longing. His suit is accepted, and they pass together with the mother of Henrietta, Madame Scilly, delicious days in a Sicilian residence. Not long before the date fixed for the marriage, chance brings his old mistress with a young child into his neighborhood. Through a striking resemblance to his own sister, Francis is convinced that the child is his. His bride discovers the secret, and an irrevocable separation follows. Soon after the mother of the child dies from consumption, and as Francis, all alone on the landing, watches the steamer which carries away his child to her mother's relative, it seems to him that at the extreme line of the horizon, colored by the rays of the setting sun, a luminous shore appeared as a land of light toward which the boat directed its course. It became for him the symbol of the new shore, of that other Promised Land toward which he was resolved to direct his walk. "The heroic sacrifice of the loving Henrietta had not been lost. The man of desire, of selfish emotion, the one who lived only to feel, even in disregard of the misery of others, was finishing to die off in him. . . . He had the certitude that if she remained separated from him by her vow, she had at least rendered him the esteem of which he felt worthy now that he had become a man of responsibility and of conscience." His sufferings he accepts as a deserved punishment, and finds consolation in the words of Christ, "Take up my cross and follow me."

From first to last page the book breathes a spirit of sincerity and purity, a moral earnestness, in strong contrast with the dilettanteism of the preceding novels.

The psychic traits we have noticed in the preceding studies might perhaps be summed up under the following heads:—

(1) The thirst for sensations; voluptuousness.—The demands of an over-excited nervous system can no more be controlled by moral dictates. Sensitiveness to the beautiful characteristic of the French, facilitates the abnormal development of sensuousness, for, as Kraft Ebbing remarks, "In sensual love is gained that warmth of fancy without which a true creation of art is impossible." The normal equilibrium between sensual love and ideal love is broken.

(2) The spirit of analysis.—It is the instrument of the seeker after sensation. Such a person derives his enjoyment from the contemplation of his emotional and sensational states, and consequently is led to analyze his psychic states, in order to delight in their pleasurable contents. Moreover, the conflict which such an attitude induces in a being not utterly deprived of moral sense, draws the attention of the subject on himself and becomes an additional incentive to introspection.

(3) The absence of faith in the moral principles.—The facts of conscience, at all times present with the well-balanced man, have been crowded below the threshold of consciousness by sensuous and intellectual presentations. Dilettanteism is one of the fruits of this psychic state; it is the child of a non-moral being.

(4) Pessimism.—It cannot fail to accompany the absence of faith in a destiny. Revealed religion is an illusion; the promises of science are illusions; even free-will is an illusion; man is but a piece of machinery in an immense insensible mechanism, working we cannot know why; good and evil are empty words. Pessimism is, moreover, increased by the diminution of life consequent upon this depressing nihilism and upon sensual excesses.

(5) Painful longings for a vague ideal; mysticism and moral inertia.—Along with the preceding characteristics we find very often aspirations towards purity. This soaring upwards is in its first stage a religious mysticism uniting sensual with ideal love. This mysticism performs the function of a bridge between the "flesh" and the "spirit." It is highly interesting as showing the close connection existing between sexual and religious feelings. In the shifting emotional condition of the men in whom we have noticed mysticism, those two feelings supersede each other; although differing in quality, they appear to be inversely proportional quantities, so that we are led to think of them as different manifestations of a unique energy. A dismal moral inertia accompanies these first desires; the abuse in the contemplation of feelings has destroyed the power of action.

We might be accused by some of having drawn a picture of France darker than reality. If we had left the sphere of literature to go lower, among the books and publications of all sorts which have no claim to literary merit, to the "feuilletons" of many daily papers, to such reviews as *la Vie Populaire*, to the novels of Richebourg, du Boisgobey, Xavier de Montépin, Paul de Koch, Paul Féval, Gaboriau, La Comtesse Dash and others,—the moral rottenness of a portion of French society would have appeared much greater. It would, nevertheless, be a glaring mistake to suppose that the writers whose characters we have tried to delineate represent the totality of the French people. The comparisons sometimes

drawn between the Paris of to-day and the Rome of the emperors is the work of detractors or of misinformed persons. The vitality shown in the wonderfully rapid recovery from the defeat of 1870 would be sufficient proof of the falsity of such intimations. The current of life to which we have drawn your attention is very noisy, it is strong, and at one time threatened to carry away the mass of the nation; but there is by its side an enormous extent of dormant waters and also a counter-current steadily enlarging.

Before arriving at the end of our task, we have still to set before you the nature and extent of this counter-current, commonly named *Neo-Christianisme*. That shall be the object of our third lecture. But previously let us ascertain *the cause and the accelerating circumstances* of this movement.

Its true cause is found, it seems to us, in the moral and religious nature of man: an abnormal and consequently painful psychic state, as the one at the base of French pessimism, tends constantly, in virtue of its unnaturalness, to pass over into another psychic state, more in harmony with the fundamental needs of human nature.

A number of exterior circumstances have, during the past twenty years, come to the help of nature in stimulating the moral and religious aspirations. Among these accelerating circumstances we place the defeat of 1870, the Paris Exposition in 1889, Russian literature, and the influence of French Switzerland.

* * * * *

The Defeat of 1870.—We begin with the first in date and the first in importance. The humiliated nation had too much spirit to lose heart. Vengeance should be taken. The wiser of the nation drew moral lessons from the unhappy war. Moralists and ardent patriots saw in the defeat the sign of degeneracy; they united to point out the root of the evil, and abroad went the idea that the nation had received a deserved punishment for its moral weaknesses. This idea accepted—and it was accepted more or less openly by many an influential man—you conceive what powerful impetus the movement of national regeneration received. Thoughtful men turned to a thorough and conscientious study of the causes of the reverse; comparisons were made between France and Germany, and out of the flood of tempestuous sentiments arose the steadfast purpose of achieving the salvation of the nation by what I shall term the moral reform. It took various names and various forms, but at bottom it is a moral reform, since the building up of men was the aim. The most important of them is the great reform of national education, concerning which we shall say a few words later; at present we simply desire to have you realize that the renovation has for one of its most potent elements the national sentiment aroused by the defeat of 1870. The *idée fixe* of the foremost statesmen and educators is the replacing of France on a footing of equality with its great neighbor and enemy, in order to be equal to any emergency and ultimately to efface the black record of 1870. This same idea lurks even around the basal notions of the less exclusively patriotic, the most universal of the leaders of the neo-Christian movement, M. Paul Desjardins. Listen to the impassioned words of the noble Ernest Lavisse, one of the most influential reformers of the national system of education, speaking to an assembly of students: "If I had not for our flag the cult of a pagan for his idol, which claims incense and at certain times hecatombs; if my heart was to forget our national sorrow, truly, I would no more know who I am and what I am doing in this world. I would have lost the principal reason for living." In the preface to *Etudes and Etudiants*, a collection of

speeches by Ernest Lavisse, we find these words: "They feel (the students) that our solicitude for them extends beyond the immediate object of their studies; that our relations are not only those of master to pupils; that through our lips a generation which has paid by public woes for its insufficiency and its faults, speaks to a generation that it desires to make better than itself in order to give to it at least an additional chance to be happy." Sometimes the wounded patriot forgets his moderation and such words as the following, uttered at a meeting of the Students' Association, carry the spur of vengeance into the hearts of his young auditors: "We, whose youth ended as the great national mourning began . . . we would not die before having seen our France restored and avenged." You perceive the spirit. The life of M. Lavisse is completely devoted to the reconstruction of the nation through education. Raoul Frary, another educator, is animated by the same patriotic idea. In his book, *La Question du Grec et du Latin*, he writes: "The invasion of 1870 compelled us to confess an inferiority of which we had to seek the origin. The example of our victors themselves was an invitation to base on a better education of our youth the hope of retaliation, or the security of the diminished territory."

The well-known philosopher, Alfred Fouillée, begins his interesting work on *L'Enseignement au point de vue National* with these words: "A league for the *renaissance physique* has been founded in France and everybody feels that we no less need to unite to give birth to an intellectual and moral renaissance." Notice, if you please, the title of the book; since 1870, there is in France no other standpoint in education than the national standpoint.

When the minister of public instruction, Bourgeois, sends out instructions warning teachers to keep from their pupils all books with sceptical tendencies, all books that could tend to diminish activity, it is not that he has found a satisfactory basis for truth, but only that he realizes the dissolving action of doubt, and fears its consequences for the nation.

Let me remark here that the Papacy and the French patriots work here in the same direction, although their aim is not the same. It may well be that in order to achieve the end it has in view, the civil power will modify its attitude towards the church and welcome its coöperation.

It is the same patriotic feeling which has instigated the uplifting efforts of Melchior de Vogue. Read his beautiful articles published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, during the Paris Exhibition, under the title *A Travers l'Exposition*, and you will understand that here again the patriot makes the moralist.

This will suffice to show how powerful has been, and still is, the national sentiment aroused by the unhappy Franco-Prussian war in furthering moral reforms. It is, in truth, a morality of a low standard, that morality which is imposed as a necessary condition of the *revanche*; it is the morality of the athlete in training, who, in order to augment his chances of victory, curbs his bad passions. But it is, nevertheless, an element of progress to which due weight must be given; we must not forget that one of the strongest pillars supporting societies is made up of those blind and generally accounted unworthy passions, which could be designated as the passions of the struggle for life, rivalry, vanity and selfish ambition.

The very interesting question of the influence of the collective body, of the national instinct, on the individual finds valuable illustrations in the facts we have just laid before you. Allow me to digress from my subject for an instant. We distinguish two

sets of reasons why a national disaster should often appeal more strongly to the individual than his own moral abasement. On the one hand, the individual cannot be fully conscious of his own degradation, for that which in him judges, his conscience, is precisely that which changes. But when the body politic, when the fatherland is suddenly crushed down, the citizen remains able to perceive in that objective fact a sign of degeneration. Moreover, while in the case of personal looseness of life, our will is hampered in its efforts at reform by the alluring sensual pleasures attached to many evil deeds, no such counteracting influence fetters our activity when the nation and not ourselves is the victim. The powerful and deeply ingrained sentiment of rivalry is also strongly awakened by a national reverse. There is an enemy before us; it is not a mere intangible passion; it is a collection of men like us; where is the valorous man whose powers of life are not quickened by the thought of a human adversary?

On the other hand, the altruistic instincts receive a strong impetus by a national danger. It is no more a question regarding ourselves only, or, perchance, our family, but it is a menace to the community with which we are bound by all sorts of ties, and further, to the whole nation, whose survival we recognize to be of more importance than our own, for we cannot escape the influence of the number.

Russian Literature.—About 1884, the sympathetic and eloquent pen of M. de Vogüé introduced the Russian novelists to the French public in a series of articles published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. A few of their books were translated and met with a prodigious success. Within a few years Russian literature invaded, we might say conquered, France. It was a craze. Gogol, Tourguenef, Dowtoiesky, Tolstoi, became the subject of gossip for society ladies, and of discussions for the men of letters. There is something almost mysterious in that subjugation of highly cultured France by the half barbarous country of the Czars.

What were those bewitching ideas coming from dark Russia? What could come from sensitive men in close touch with modern knowledge and western civilization, witnessing, as fellow-countrymen, the social barbarity and the wide physical and moral misery of their kinsmen; what could be in the breast of such men but sadness, revolt against civil power,—perhaps against divine power,—pity and despair or, perchance, hope?

Russian literature is pervaded by a strain of intense sadness and a deep pity. But beyond the sorrows of human existence, the writers see hope, for, however radical the intellectual scepticism of some of them may be, conscience and duty remain undethroned. Their books throb with moral earnestness, and whatever pessimistic expressions may be found in their pages, the reader leaves them with the impression that man is not a mere waif tossed nowhere by the billows of life, but that he is rolled about in a world of sorrow by his own passions. Sin is the cause of the sufferings of man.

Russian novelists have captivated the French, because they treat of the life and death problem, which, unable to solve, the French appeared ready to abandon: the meaning of life, because they bring to its study the sympathy of a young healthy person, instead of the hopeless sorrow of a decadence; because they have a true pity, or better, a Christian charity for the sufferers and the fallen; because they reveal a world of faith and of action.

Sincere emotion, unselfish interest in others was blunted in France; the strong, vibrating voice of the Russians has vivified the

source of human sympathy and of brotherly love. Compassion and pity are the two virtues which have penetrated deepest. It was, perhaps, the best gift that could be made to France in a time of cold indifference and of monstrous development of egoistical individualism.

The Paris Exhibition in 1889 must be counted as one of the events which greatly stimulated the various reforms. The French never lost confidence in themselves, but the proof of vitality, the vindication of the immense resources of the nation, of the industry, skill and intelligence of the people which the great exhibition furnished, filled every French man with a new hope and a new energy. In 1889 France resumed, in its own opinion, its former place among the great powers of Europe. The exhibition was the first visible step towards *la revanche*; it became the voucher of a new era.

French Switzerland.—The exchange of thoughts between French Switzerland and France is considerable, for the language is the same in the two nations and they are contiguous. The Suisse Romande unites many of the traits of the Germanic to many of those of the Latin race. The French Swiss is less brilliant, but perhaps more reliable, steadier; less enthusiastic, but more persistent; coarser in his sensations, less artistic, but morally stronger than the French. Thanks, in part to its vital Protestantism, the morals of Switzerland are comparatively pure and simple. Its literature reflects the national character, and exercises in France an influence often disregarded by its great neighbor out of a sentiment of ungenerous pride.

The philosopher who is looked upon as the philosopher of the neo-Christian movement now in progress, *Charles Secrétan*, is a Swiss professor. Paul Desjardins could aptly be called his pupil. Long practically ignored in France, he has come into prominence with the religious awakening. At the beginning of the year, Desjardins and his friends induced him to come to Paris and meet the French philosophers in public discussions in the interest of Christian spiritualism. The students seized upon the occasion to manifest the honor in which they hold the venerable professor of Lausanne University. We shall have a few additional words to say on Charles Secrétan at a later time.

Brunetière, the first French critic of the day, recently elected member of the French Academy, is one of the very few litterateurs of mark who hold to a positive criterion of truth. In an article on *Alexandre Vinet*, the Swiss critic and theologian of the middle of this century, he declares that he owes to no historian of literature so much as to the author of the *Etudes sur Pascal*. If Brunetière, in opposition to nearly all literary France, approves of Vinet putting the ethical question to the front in a history of literature, who shall say that he does not owe that high notion to Vinet himself, with whom the moral value of ideas makes the value of literature? The same authority, speaking of the *Etudes sur Pascal*, says: "It is the most exact, the most penetrating and the deepest work ever written on the author of the *Pensées*. When Sainte Beuve was composing his masterly history of Port Royal, he went to Lausanne and spent there a year in close intellectual companionship with Vinet, whom he venerated as a master.

We need not revert here to Edouard Rod, whose spirit we have tried to set forth when speaking of the Tormented, nor do we need to dwell longer on this topic. What precedes will suffice to indicate that the influence of French Switzerland is in the direction of the moral and religious revival going on in France.

Transformation in the Roman Catholic Church.—We cannot pass on to the neo-Christian movement without taking cognizance of the present attitude of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to France. Under the far-seeing leadership of Pope Leo XIII., the church is undergoing an epoch-making transformation, aiming at a better adaptation to the social and scientific progress of the world.

Among the many history-making acts of Leo XIII., there are two of special interest to us: the return to the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and the acknowledgment of the Republic. In the encyclical letter, *Æterni Patris* (1879), the Pope recommended the study of Saint Thomas as the best philosophy for Catholicism. A little later an academy was founded at Rome to set the example. Not long ago, a baccalaureate in scholastic philosophy was established at the Catholic Institute of Paris. Nearly every week sees new books on Saint Thomas. At the order and expense of the Pope, a new complete edition of his works is being issued. Discussions and comments on his doctrines fill the Catholic papers, and this not only in France, but still more so in Germany, in Belgium and in the United States. Since Leo uttered this encomium—"Reason carried on the wings of Saint Thomas to the pinnacle of human nature can hardly rise higher"—the name of Saint Thomas is on the lips of all the faithful. "Thus, says Saint Thomas," is now the watchword in the Roman Church.

What is the significance of this move to the peripatetic philosophy? Two motives are attributed to Leo XIII.: The opposition of the church to the republican form of government had become dangerous to its existence in France, and was a serious impediment to its progress in the United States. The doctrine of Saint Thomas allows of all sorts of governments, according to circumstances, on the principle of the natural rights of man. So that the acceptance of his philosophy rendered legitimate the step which the Sovereign Pontiff contemplated taking, the adhesion to the French republic. The other motive is to make possible a Roman Catholic unanimity in philosophy, for if the Catholics have been united on the questions of dogma, their philosophical tenets have greatly varied. The political successes of the Catholic party in Belgium and in Germany are due, in part at least, to the spirit of unity produced by the new papal policy.

Another very significant sign of the new life which is being instilled in the church by the powerful breath of the venerable Leo XIII. are the Catholic congresses of scientists. "Science is our great enemy; then let us make it an ally by developing among us the scientific spirit and scientific knowledge," thus spoke certain well-advised Romanists. The first congress, a very small assembly of men of little notoriety, met in 1888; the second was held in 1891, and proved completely successful; a third one is announced for 1894. From the first the warm sympathy and active support of the Pope assured the success of this remarkable association. The Holy Catholic Church enticing young men to seek in the field of science the renovation of its apologetics! It is, indeed, a wide departure from its traditional policy. One can well ask whether science and scholastic philosophy, united by the paternal hand of Rome, will live together peaceably. These congresses of scientists have already produced such fruits that one of the redactors of the *Revue Philosophique* has said: "We shall soon have to reckon with the Catholics in the religious, social and pedagogical questions. France will soon know, as already Germany and Belgium do, how much vitality the return to Thomism has infused into the Roman Catholic Church."

In *résumé*, it appears that the Roman Church is undergoing a transformation in order to adapt itself to the changed condition of society. It had remained too far behind modern civilization; now the wise Leo XIII. is making a powerful effort to regain contact with the modern world. How far will this liberal tendency go? Will it, under the influence of such men as Desjardins and de Vogüé, extend to the essential reforms, which alone will permit of its reaping the fruits of the spiritual awakening? If the Catholic Church is to draw to its bosom the French youth, the reforms undertaken are only precursory to much deeper transformations. But we shall have occasion to recur to this point when speaking of M. Desjardins.

III. THE NEO-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT.

Ernest Lavisse, Melchior de Vogüé and Paul Desjardins, around whom the forces of moral reconstruction centre, differ widely from each other, although generally mentioned together. All three have at heart the moral renovation of France, but their conception of the evil, their attitude before the problem, and the solution they propose, separate them sharply from each other.

Their field of direct activity is the cultivated youth and especially the Paris' students. Lavisse and Desjardins are both professors at the Sorbonne, and, although not in official connection with the students, de Vogüé has become by his writings their admired master. All three are literary men; Desjardins is professor of rhetoric; Lavisse occupies the chair of history, and de Vogüé is one of the most brilliant writers of our time. The two last named are members of the French Academy. We note the exceptional fact that this moral and spiritual awakening starts from the higher sphere of intellectual and social life, while heretofore the religious conquests have generally been made with the help of ignorance, or at least independently of learning. We welcome this fact as a sign of true progress. Christ's message was primarily addressed to the poor and the lowly; it finds more ready acceptance among those whom neither wealth nor social position nor intellectual ambition incites to unrighteous living. Today the learned and the great become the prophets of the revival. It is the vindication of intelligence, it is the glorification of the democratic spirit, it is also a sign of the recognition that the evil lies in great part in a false exercise of the mental faculties.

We shall endeavor to represent to you the spirit and the activity of these three persons.

ERNEST LAVISSE.

Ernest Lavisse wields the greatest influence over the university students. He has gained their confidence and their admiration; he is the beloved master to whose enthusiastic and authoritative voice they intently listen. Far from confining himself to his historical teachings, his large mind and his patriotic heart are chiefly concerned with the reform of education, through which it is hoped France will regain the preponderant position lost in 1870. According to his belief, universities create nations. Lavisse is not moved, as is Desjardins, by the degradation of the individual. We have had occasion while speaking of the circumstances which stimulated the moral movement to quote a few passages from our historian. From them you have gathered that the moral evil appeals to him through the degeneracy of the nation. If he seeks with all the might of his powerful nature to rebuild manhood, it is not out

of hatred for sin, nor chiefly out of love for his fellow-men, but to the glory of his beloved fatherland. Before him stands constantly the spectre of France vanquished and threatened with complete destruction by the foe of the east. Under the spur of this vision he buckles on his armor and calls upon the young men to prepare for the coming struggle. The following passage from a speech to the students of the Faculté des Lettres reveals why Ernest Lavisse is a historian, and at the same time why he is one of the most ardent advocates of the reform of national education: "I follow an intimate and very urgent sentiment when I insist on the necessity of a serious and sustained effort in the study of our own history. This sentiment is that the University of France has certain duties to fulfill towards your country, duties resting especially on the professors of history. My conscience would reproach me if I did not represent to you that in a time when the rivalry among the nations is violent and will become ferocious, every people must richly nurture all the sources of its national energy.

. To-day the most active nations seek in their origins the demonstration of the rationale of their existence, and seek in the past the guarantee of their future. Then, either we must absolutely deny the power of ideas and of sentiments on the souls, and consequently on the activity of men, or we must admit that the national energy is increased when a people is given the consciousness of its value, and a feeling of pride in its history; when the enlightened men have a clear notion of the genius of their country and of the rôle it has played in the world, and when a sentiment of pity towards the fatherland descends from the high regions of historical researches down to the deep stratum of the people."

The written work of Lavisse is not considerable. He exercises his influence and accomplishes his purpose through daily contact with the students, through speeches and allocutions delivered in their assemblies, at banquets, at the opening of the sessions of the Sorbonne, and on every other favorable occasion. Some of his speeches and discourses have been collected in two volumes, *Etudes et Etudiants* and *Questions d'Enseignement National*. He published in addition two historical works, *Vue G n rales de l'Histoire politique de l'Europe* and *Trois Empereurs d'Allemagne*. Often he addresses his inspiring words to the teachers and the professors, laying on them the responsible duty of forming citizens by whom France's future grandeur may be edified: "We have to-day many things to say to our youth, things which are not in the curricula nor in the examinations. We must not make an abuse of those confidences, of these advices, of those high moralizings, but we must not neglect that part of our duty. It is a very great error to leave the essential untold under the pretext that it is understood."¹ Similar words are uttered by other eminent professors. In his book on *L'Education dans l'Universit *, M. H. Marion writes: "Do not fear to go down from your chairs among your students; do not fear, between two explanations of Latin texts, between two corrections of exercises, to warn, to direct, the consciences of those over whom you are the guardians, and who expect, who demand, from you something else than mere notions and classification of knowledge."

One of the signs of the new life pervading the French students in which Lavisse lays great hopes and great pride is the *Students' Association*. Prior to 1884, the students of the different parts of the

¹ From the preface to *Etudes et Etudiants*.

University of France had no relations with each other. At that date the Paris association was authorized. In 1889 it numbered 1,550 active members, with an endowment fund of 13,000 francs, and about as much available money. Since then the society has greatly increased in number and activity. The purpose of the association is simply the concentration of the French youth, the union of the various schools in order to create an *esprit de corps*, to stimulate and to help each other. It is in his relation to the association that the large-hearted sympathy of Lavissee and his warm patriotism best display themselves. No occasion is lost by him to fraternize with the students, to rejoice or to mourn with them, to warn or to praise them, and above all, to breathe into them the burning patriotic spirit which is his life. He comes to the tomb of one of their number to weep with them and to comfort them. Addressing himself to the dead, he says: "My dear Delambre, as to me I was not satisfied to love you. Deep in my heart I felt for you sentiments of gratitude because you possessed the qualities and the virtues which we wish for the French youth; we whose youth ended as the great mourning began, we would not die before having seen our France restored and avenged. Your name remains associated with that sacred hope."

The following citation gives a good idea of the tone of Lavissee's patriotic speeches, and indicates the importance attached to the Students' Association. It is taken from an eloquent address to the students after the return of the association's delegates from the festival of the University of Bologna in 1887, at which the principal universities of every civilized nation were represented: "I feel still the charm and the gracefulness of the festivals of hospitable Bologna. But above all else I admired there two things, the enthusiastic salute of our Italian comrades to our flag, and your serious and proud manner of holding that flag. . . . The return from Bologna has been the occasion for an ovation, for the public begin to understand that the students are able to do a national work. You have at last given to French youths their legitimate place. They were an anonymous crowd, disseminated in the faculties and in the schools, knowing not each other. You have made of them a body, noble among all, a person in the nation. Through you we know what *les jeunes* are. Formerly we could have believed that *les jeunes* were a few original young men, mannerists, dilettante, or worse than that, men who carry with them the disgust of life as a new fad. *Les jeunes* are you, you whom we have seen vibrate at the sound of certain utterances, quiver with certain emotions; whom we have heard express by acclamations addressed to the chief of the state the cult you profess for liberty, for honor and for your country. You are *les jeunes*, you, my friends, you who sing, you who laugh, you who work joyfully. You possess activity, valor, common sense, gaiety, humor, enthusiasm; you possess the soul, the whole soul of France. I am among those to whom you have more than once during these last days brought tears to the eyes. I thank you for it. We who have suffered much regain confidence in the perpetuity of the renovation of the national forces. We see after our winter the herald of a bright coming spring."

Where is the young heart that would not be carried away by so much sympathy and by so noble and so deep emotion?

MELCHIOR DE VOGÜÉ.

The Vicomte Melchior de Vogüé, the youngest of the forty Immortels, is a talented gentleman of leisure, who, after having

served his country in the unhappy war of 1870, has set himself quietly to philosophizing on the state of France. Having understood and felt the contradictory sentiments which agitate the young generation, its aspirations, its moral sufferings, he has sought the solution of the problem.

M. de Vogüé is one of those rare, harmoniously developed minds, so full of imagination and of elegance, so bright and so easy, that their prose is comparable to the murmuring brook winding its elegant curves across the flowery meadow. As far as we know, he never wrote a real book, only short compositions, appearing generally in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, have come from his pen. Some ten years ago, he introduced the Russian novelist into France. On that score only, France owes him a heavy debt of gratitude. It would be difficult to estimate how much the literature of the country of the Czars has modified him. His literary baggage comprises a series of articles on the great Russian writers; studies on his favorite authors, Lamartine and Chateaubriand, whose brilliancy of style is often equaled by de Vogüé; historical, or rather historical-poetical reveries; a few symbolic and mystic novelettes; a number of articles on the Paris Exposition, etc. Many of these writings have been united in book form under the titles: *A travers l'Exposition*, *Heures d'Histoire*, *Spectacles Contemporains*, *Regards Historiques et Littéraires*.

M. de Vogüé is a poet, although he writes but in prose. We regret that he is so strongly inclined to poetical beauty, to art and to mysticism. His rôle of moral director of his generation is thereby greatly diminished, for all along the road he stops to gather honey from the flowers, and often forgets practical reality to lose himself in beautiful fancies. At such times those who would like to follow him doubt his earnestness and are tempted to distrust their guide. He has neither the enthusiasm, nor the bottom-deep convictions, nor the hatred of moral evil, nor the boldness of a true reformer. French youth has for a while gathered around his enchanting and sympathetic voice; it has bewitched them, it will not be able to incite them to a regenerating activity.

But we have not yet said what are the essential opinions of Vogüé as a reformer. He believes in democracy and science, those two queens of the age; but science and democracy have not the full secret of life. Of themselves they are unable to maintain social life. The principle which will save the nation is the old leaven of the gospel—love, and the spirit of sacrifice which accompanies it. Science and democracy must recognize that mysterious principle. While visiting the Paris Exhibition he stopped one day before the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," that proclamation of the principles promulgated by the Revolution, and to this day the official basis of the French state, which was written in large letters on the walls of the school exhibit, "My country and my century," says he, "appeared to me as coming out of that fatidical placard. . . . I read twenty times each line, sincerely endeavoring to find a solid foundation for the support of that enormous weight, the social life of a great nation, and every time I came back to the same conclusions, all that I read on that wall is beautiful, generous, desirable, but it is a dream," and one by one he takes the affirmations or the assumptions of the Declaration and judges them false or incomplete: the law is not the expression of the general will; we are not born good; we are not born free and equal, etc. Our ancestors of the great Revolution moved in a chimerical world. "The nothingness of our social foundation

appeared fully only after one hundred years of consecutive destruction; a hundred years during which our France has staggered from convulsion to convulsion from the lack of a solid footing on which to steady its course. . . . The whole century runs on that chimerical ground, and people wonder that it totters."

Thus far it is very well; the science-intoxicated youth feel now too well the insufficiency of the principles of the Revolution to resent de Vogüé's impeachment of this most glorious historical event. But he goes further. After having said the inadequacy of science and reason, and named its complement, love and sacrifice, he points out to Rome as to the power by which the desired renovation can alone be accomplished. Not long ago in an article entitled *Pensées d'Histoire dans Rome*,¹ he boldly exposes his views in this respect. Before the suggestive ruins of past ages, our historian is deeply impressed with the idea that we are on the wrong track with our analytical rage, with our confidence in the detailed document, with our pretension to explain life by laboratory dissections. "The coming world pants for recomposition; it will be grouped only around simple ideas." Now these simple ideas, destined to crystallize the coming era, are found, according to de Vogüé, in the Roman Catholic Church. Rome is the centre of history. It is to the papal Rome, from which we appear ready to break loose, that we must return to escape social death. There the infinite chain of events which make up history begins and ends. It would be highly entertaining, if so serious a question admitted of mirth, to observe the sensitive imagination of our poet carried away over every obstacle before the expressive remnants of the past grandeur of Rome. He tells us that the column of Trajan, terminated and dominated by the statue of St. Peter, a nimbus around the forehead, the keys in the hand, will always be the centre of the world. His veneration for the Pope is no doubt deserved, but many will refrain from joining him in his submissive admiration of the *Vigie*, as he designates him, "in the tower of the Vatican, seeking the road for the world committed to his keeping." M. de Vogüé does not know exactly how the nineteenth century's link will manage to get in the chain; but that does not seem to disturb him in the least, for he assumes the attitude of a true Romanist: the *Vigie* it is who shall find out the way; as for him, his duty is fulfilled when he has pointed to the astonished youth the new brazen serpent to which the universe must look to be saved. The questions of infallibility, of sacerdotal hierarchy, of theocracy, of the various dogmas, sacramental and others, he does not even mention. Is it that he fully agrees with all the doctrines of the church? We can answer no without hesitation. Somewhere he deplores that orthodox teachings do not persuade French youth; it would be otherwise, says he, if those teachings claimed the best established among the scientific doctrines in vogue, if they showed how with a transposition of words determinism becomes the doctrine of grace and predestination; how heredity, with all its biological consequences, enters into the conception of original sin; how selection becomes the redemption by works, etc. But we may suppose without great danger of being mistaken that the Roman Church is not quite ready to make the suggested transposition of words, and meanwhile we do not see well how M. de Vogüé can get along with the church. Let us remember—and this will perhaps be the key to a great puzzle—that beauty is the supreme argument to an artist, that it is abundantly able to cover a multitude of false notions and super-

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1892.

stitious ideas, and that the Roman Catholic Church, in its history as well as in its actual form, has a great deal that appeals strongly to an æsthetic nature. His blind veneration for the Church of Rome becomes offensive when he declares that only the men who wear the cloth and who have acquired the right of commanding the hearts through the bruises inflicted to theirs by the triple vow of obedience, chastity and poverty, have really the right to carry on a religious reformation. "Let us be content," says he, "to be approximately honest people, that is already not so easy, even with the seven sins a day conceded to the wise." "The great blow of holy folly which is to change the world, if it must come, will be dealt—it is at least probable—by one of those men who are the natural ministers of the sublime follies, again by the right of their cloth and of their triple vow." The right of their cloth! That sounds decidedly too clerical to please the youth of the nineteenth century. M. de Vogüé might learn before long that the spirit of sublime folly does not blow only in the tattered garments of the traditional church.

PAUL DESJARDINS.

We have come to a personality very different from that of Lavisé or of de Vogüé. The sweetly ironic critic whom we have had occasion to quote, Anatole France, draws the following portrait of our professor of rhetoric: "As to M. Desjardins, one cannot reproach him with a too frivolous gaiety. I do not think that I shall displease him if I say that he gives himself the face of an apostle rather than that of a critic. He is severe. He does not like that people should write. To him literature is the beast of the Apocalypse. A well turned sentence is a public danger. He does not criticise, he anathematizes without hatred. Pale and melancholy, he goes about scattering tender maledictions." Even so would France have spoken of many a holy man whose name is kept in the calendar of the church. To be accurate, the portrait should describe him as "deeply serious" instead of "melancholy," and the word "literature" should be understood to mean that French modern literature of which we have spoken at the beginning.

With M. Desjardins the loud declamation of the natural rights of man has changed into an appeal to the natural duties of all men to their fellow-men; the love of the country, patriotism, has been replaced by the larger moving force, the love of man—the all embracing love; and Roman Catholicism by Christianity. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is the key-note of his message. We have recently re-read the few pages we have from M. Desjardins, together with scattered talks of others about him. From these perusals we have received one of the most Christ-like impressions that ever man made upon us. We have discovered no reason for restriction of approval or of admiration. There are today many a youth and many a man of high social position proud of being called his disciple.

Before proceeding we would like to prevent a possible misunderstanding which the appellation "neo-Christian" might cause. What is being revived contains nothing new, it is simply Christianity devoid of the adulterating additions made by the apostles and after them by the church.

To understand and estimate correctly the significance and the probable consequences of Desjardins' work, it is to be kept in mind that he does not speak from the desert or from some consecrated asylum of devotion; on the contrary his voice is that of one fed

with all the knowledge of the age; it echoes in the halls of the old University of France, the centre of this tottering civilization; the same halls which only the other day heard the sarcastic paradoxes of Renan about God and virtue, and the despairing stoicism of Taine. His disciples are not the disinherited and the ignorant, but the members of the University; the vehicle of the new propagandism is not some modest church paper, it is the great political paper, *Le Journal des Débats*, or the literary review, *La Revue Bleue*, or even the *Figaro*. But let us pass on to his two most important publications, *Le Devoir Présent*, and *La Conversion de l'Eglise*.

Le Devoir Présent, Paris, 1892. This small pamphlet is the manifesto of a man burdened with a mission of moral reform. *Primum vivere* is its motto. The preliminary step in an ethical reform is to come to a decision as to whether the subjection to animal instinct, to egoism, to lying is an absolute evil, or if it is only an inelegance. This debated question is surely more important and especially more urgent than that of the divinity of Christ, or even than that of the existence of a personal God. The author has settled that question for himself. "I profess, in all certitude," says he, "that humanity has a destiny and that we live for something." He does not know exactly what is to be understood by the word "destiny." "There-upon I have only dreams born of a deep but incommunicable love which an equal love only could understand." In the battle fought around these great questions the negatives appear to have the upper hand even without any hope of reversal. The liking for duty seems decidedly to have passed away. Voluptuousness in all its forms, sensualism, is the plague which devours our society. "If one wants to understand what fiery vice burns in us, let him simply observe the looks that dignified men, gray-headed men, cast on an honest woman passing by. What tension, what spasm of lustfulness!" France has lost its soul and it struggles to regain it. We know well what is meant by soul. The humblest among us has felt at certain times superior to himself, he has been filled with the spirit of sacrifice that is, in reality, with the spirit of liberty. We have all observed the fluctuations of that soul in us, now arousing us to enthusiastic activity, now leaving us cold and passive. M. Desjardins does not know how that sublime state of waking love develops, but he knows that only such a state deserves the name of positive morality. There have been times when such a spirit inspired and moved France: in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, e. g., at the time of the Crusades. The Crusades were the proud victory of a society on natural egoism. Shall such a period recur? "I answer intrepidly that I so believe." Then the author mentions some statements which tend to render to national life a little of the altruistic energy it has lost; the territorial acquisition in Africa is a gift of hope, for it will call for energy, patriotism, sacrifice; the question of Alsace-Lorraine, which is for the French similar to that of the Irish question for England. With the reawakening of the national life, he believes that infallibly the moral and the religious life will be stimulated by reason of their solidarity. Our prophet has sometimes answers which do not satisfy reason, but they are given with so much confidence that they almost persuade. Do you know why France is about to recover her soul? "The sure answer is, that to live one must have a soul. We are then at the eve of having a soul. Let us hold to that position; it is very strong." The other alternative, death, does not seem even to come to his mind. Now since it is admitted and recognized that the hour is approaching at which humanity will recover possession of itself and resume

its ascending march, we have to hasten with all our might the arrival of this happy moment. The future shall be what we now will it to be. "It is why at this decisive instant, when I am about to expose my plans and mark my foot on a virgin snow, I cannot repress the joy, the divine ardor which penetrates me." For years the author had caressed in secret the hopes he now expresses publicly.

The first thing to be done is to understand each other, we positives, to unite ourselves for concerted action. We hear all around us that on some religious creed only we will be able to unite efficiently; as if man could not live until he has made a theological or philosophical stage. Our work shall have in no way an ecclesiastical character. The divers faiths which express themselves socially by the same acts and by an equal love, whatever they may be called, are for us synonymous. Our position is at the confluent of the multifarious sources of morality and of the good desires called Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or philosophic. Everyone while uniting with us may keep his special faith. Our only demand on our associates is that they should live for something, that they should believe in a duty. Here he quotes M. Secrétan, "The cause that we would like to serve, the crisis which our prayer asks, is not a return to the past, but the advent of a new era; it is Christianity in spirit and in truth, which has always subsisted in some souls, but has never reigned." The new faiths proposed, neo-Catholicism, neo-Protestantism, neo-Buddhism, are equally inefficacious, for they reach the heart and the will only through the intermediary of intelligence; they are speculative. The question is not to believe, but first of all to love. Abandoning all project of union on such or such a speculative truth, *we want to reach faith through obedience to duty.*

The last pages of *le Devoir Présent* are taken up by an enumeration in thirteen points of the practical fields in which for two or three years the activity of the positives should be directed.¹ It seems that after this preparatory stage, M. Desjardins contemplates undertaking a more aggressive and sharply limited work of moral reform, such as experience and circumstances shall indicate.

We have said elsewhere that M. Desjardins could be called a pupil of M. Charles Secrétan; as we have already consumed too much of your time with the matter here brought before you, we shall abstain from dwelling lengthily on this philosopher, whose influence is becoming preponderant, in France and in Switzerland, in the spheres of religion and of sociology. But we shall avail ourselves of this occasion to indicate the leading ideas of his philosophy, in order to give honor to whom honor is due, and to mark still more clearly the character and scope of the neo-Christian movement.

* * * *

Charles Secrétan, professor at the Lausanne University, Switzerland, correspondent of the French Institute and of the American Association for the Advancement of the Social Science, can be fitly designated as the philosopher of free-will. His system of philosophy finds its strongest support in the *facts of conscience*; he endeavors to reinstate them in their proper place, from which they seem to have been removed by the theory of evolution. For him religion is a form *sui generis* of the moral life; it is not, as many think, a childish form of science; it must necessarily subsist as

¹ For complementary information on *le Devoir Présent*, see the *Pedagogical Seminary*, Vol. II. No. 2, p. 253.

long as humanity itself, through all the phases of its development. In *la Civilisation* and *la Croyance*, in which he reviews and gives an answer to the great social, theological and metaphysical questions from the practical point of view, he declares that "the supremacy of the moral idea is the vital element of modern thought, that it is the seed of truth which must, before all things else, be preserved and cultivated," and also that "to think of oneself, to live for one's own self, is to lose one's life. To give ourselves to others is the only chance of salvation: such is the lesson which the present circumstances teach us, . . . that truth of the present moment is the eternal truth, it is the whole truth" It is not amiss that such a philosophy is called Christian. Elsewhere we find these lines pointing again to the centre of his philosophy: "In a time when all the artificial props are ruined, . . . in a time when moral checks alone subsist, when all depends more manifestly than ever on the individual will, to redress that will, to state precisely the idea of duty, to reanimate the sense of duty, in putting it in its place in the centre of life and of thought,—such is the true question, such is the object of our effort." The appeal to the facts of moral consciousness is the point of departure and the bulwark of the whole system. The way in which these facts are presented as scientific facts deserving preëminence over all the other facts of consciousness, and the confidence with which it is done, make of M. Secrétan's work an original system of the highest common sense philosophy. His published works are numerous: *La Philosophie de la Liberté*, 2 vols., *le Principe de la Morale*, *Recherche de la Methode, Raison et Christianisme*, *les Droits de l'Humanité*, a volume on Victor Cousin and one on Leibnitz, *la Civilisation et la Croyance*, etc.

* * * *

We come back to M. Desjardins. Until 1892 he had preached the need of a reform, and in *le Devoir Présent* had traced the lines along which it should be made. In January 1892, he went a step further toward the realization of his theories, and founded the *Ligue pour l'Action Morale*. The earnestness of M. Desjardins is manifested by this decisive step. The *Ligue* is composed of a mere handful of men, but in such an undertaking number is not often a token of strength. It works in silence and almost in retirement. We surmise that for the present, in the face of the difficult task before them, these men feel the need of meditation; they await the coming of the inspiring spirit. The members of the *Ligue* belong to the most varied faiths and social positions; men allied to no church, heretics as to all religious confessions, Roman Catholics, Protestant pastors and laymen are united in the same desire and in the belief—for them the most and perhaps the only important articles of the various Christian faiths—in the categoric imperative of duty and in the power of love. The *Ligue* publishes every three weeks a bulletin for its members.

At times when we allow our imagination to stray away in the beautiful ideal world, we see this humble association rising in strength and in spiritual influence, until its ramifications spread all over France, transforming the bitter fruits of incomplete civilization with that old leaven of Christian love which once already, 2,000 years ago, renovated the world. Is that only a dream? Shall it not find realization? The occurrences of the present seem to give an affirmative answer to this last query. Religions of intellectual

¹ The reality and the extent of the corruption which we have tried to set forth in our rapid survey of modern French literature, find additional confirmation from the fear of social ruin openly expressed by such men as Secrétan, Lavisse, Desjardins, de Vogüé, etc.

creeds are yielding place to the universal religion of the heart; intellectual barriers are already falling to pieces, not everywhere, nor completely, it is true; were we to forget it, we would quickly be recalled to the true state of things by one of the many for whom to be Christian is to believe in a certain set of doctrines and dogmas. One of the standard-bearers of French militant Protestantism, writing in the *Revue Chrétienne*, a strong organ of advanced Protestantism, scoffs at Desjardins and at the *Ligue pour l'Action Morale* for putting action, not only before faith, but even above faith. "A Christian," says M. de Presseusé, "has the duty to salute, with sympathy, the first timid stammerings of a moral reform; he has not the right to associate with such an enterprise on the ill-defined ground of a kind of religious neutrality. . . . The harbor is no more to be found, it is at the foot of the Cross." It is precisely the foot of the Cross—to use an illustration distasteful on account of its many associations with bigoted ideas—which Desjardins and his associates seek, while our advanced Protestants worship still at the feet of the apostles and of the church fathers. In answer to the objection against the preëminence given to action, the words of the Apostle Paul might be quoted: "And now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three. But the greatest of these is charity." Now charity is not faith, but action. But to appeal to a better authority, experience, we would remark that faith, not faith in creeds—that does not mean anything to the mass—but faith in the moral principles, is established by action and can be best developed by action, for it is engendered by feeling accompanying moral activity, positively or negatively exercised.

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Before saying a few words on Desjardins' position towards the Roman Catholic Church, let us embrace at a glance, for comparison's sake, the two movements led respectively by Lavissee and de Vogüé

Ernest Lavissee personifies the idea of the renovation of the national life through education. His God is the nation; his gospel is "love your country and prepare to serve it worthily." This is without doubt a large and noble sentiment, able, in a proud and generous people, to check the dissolving effects of a life without purpose. The sight of a nation shaking off its pessimism, its sensualism, its nihilism, at the thrill of a newly awakened patriotism, is one of the grandest spectacles that history presents. It is a striking illustration of the saving influence of altruism. But is not the peace of our civilization endangered by this stirring up of national pride? Does it not bring with it the hatred of the enemy and the thirst for revenge? Is patriotism the true support of the moral life? No, it is but a tonic or a palliative. The devotion to one's country cannot be sufficient to a complete healthy, human life. In moments of intense national rivalry, it will be a powerful lever. But what will happen after the victory or the defeat?—Just what happens, after the encounter, in the well-regulated life of the prize-fighter. Civilized society needs a deeper and truer base of existence, including in itself patriotism and all other virtues. The citizen's life must have a purpose distinct from and above the service of his country, a faith having its foundation in his deeper moral nature. M. Ernest Lavissee does not deal with the true problem.

We have seen that le Vicomte Melchior de Vogüé is a charming writer, a beautiful mystical soul, not in the least inclined to asceticism, but rather having an artistic weakness for the beautiful,

especially when it is allied to grandeur and power. To the insufficiency of science and democracy, he advocates the addition of the Christian principles of love and sacrifice, and courageously declares his belief that nothing durable can be done nor will be done for the salvation of society independently of the Roman Catholic Church. There is room for some reforms in the church, but it is evidently not the business of its dutiful sons to point out to an infallible Pope the defects which mar the grand old structure and make it untenable to so many good men. We must, in all religious affairs, await the good pleasure of His Holiness. It appears that M. de Vogüé lulls himself with the hope that the imperative needs for some form of religion, which now torment the young generation, will prevail upon them to throw above board the clearest and grandest acquisitions of the past—the independence of the reason and the liberty of conscience—and cause them to imprison themselves in that senile ecclesiastical machine.

As soon as M. de Vogüé had promulgated his fancies, the French youth raised a loud cry, a good deal like a sneer, against the man to whom they had listened with joy and thankfulness as long as he talked of love and sacrifice only. Traditional authority, ecclesiastical authority, papal infallibility, cannot suit the people who made the Revolution of 1789; no more can the orthodox doctrines of the church satisfy the youth, nourished with the science of the nineteenth century. The agitation was greatest among those who regard the religious revival with a suspicious eye, and this spring the opposition crystallized into a society calling itself "*La Ligue Démocratique des Ecoles*." Its programme manifests a strong anti-religious sentiment. To apply in all questions the severe scientific methods only, and to take as sole rule of conduct the reason, to proscribe all mysticism and all religionism, are the main articles of its statutes. To this negative side is added a positive one: the study of the social questions. This open and constituted opposition is very regrettable, but it was to be foreseen by the readers of de Vogüé's articles. Soon after the foundation of the Ligue Démocratique, a sort of great inaugural was held at the "Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes," at which M. Aulard, the distinguished occupant of the new chair of the History of the Revolution at the Sorbonne, was the orator. He availed himself of the occasion to assail vigorously with arguments and raillery the neo-mystic-religious dreams. To them he opposed the principles of the Revolution and the declarations of science, on which alone the future can be built. It is in vain that some gentlemen of leisure, having found Chateaubriand's inkstand, have set about resuscitating the faded glory of the "Génie du Christianisme." The unknown God, whom they say young men are seeking, is only too well known. It is the God who, for so many centuries, has fettered the reason. M. de Vogüé, who, although not named in the speech, was the special target of the orator, answered in a bright but unsatisfactory article.¹ The Quartier Latin did not remain a passive spectator of the discussion. French students are always near the point of ebullition. Immediately the old politico-religious passions sprang up and superseded the tone of quiet religious earnestness which had swept over a good part of the Quartier. Catholics and Liberals, neo-Christians and Radicals, who had remained ill-defined, drew into battle array. Manifestations were held by the different parties. On May the 17th, Professor Aulard was to lecture on the "Convention Nationale" of 1793, and

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 1, 1893.

specially on the discussion, then held, relative to the article on religious liberty. The amphitheatre was crowded long before the appearance of the professor. As he enters, cries of *Vive Aulard! Vive la Revolution!* arise. He hardly begins when a group of Catholic students leave the hall ostentatiously. They are followed by a large number of Liberals. In the street, blows are brought to bear on the debate, until the police intervention makes an end of the affray. Catholics and Free-thinkers are again at sword's-edge in the university. MM. Aulard and de Vogüé, the champions of the old rationalism and of the old clericalism, must deeply regret this explosion of political passions caused by their utterances, whatever may be their convictions. The safest anticipation that can be made on the issue of this regrettable conflict is that M. de Vogüé's influence on the students will be limited to the small number of Catholics. The wise keep away from these extremes, and instead of placing themselves under the auspices of secular or ecclesiastical historical events, they remain in the sphere of the revelations of consciousness. Only there peace and good will towards all can prevail.

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M. Paul Desjardins, as differentiated from Lavissee, views the problem in its essential and universal aspect. Sensualism and egoism, these inseparable sisters, born of a diminution of life, itself the result of the lack of great, disinterested ambitions and of the negations of science, are the real evils. What is needed is a solid basis on which an individual—and consequently also a national—life can be built. Where is that foundation to be found? The exterior supports of right living have fallen down. Exterior revelation, tradition, reason itself are disbelieved. Desjardins seeks the answer to this question in the inner life of man, in the centre of his nature. When everything else has failed, it remains in us a *sense of direction*; there is the answer. Do not rely on an exterior revelation, do not trust in any external authority, nor even in reason, but rely on your deeper self. Learn from the facts of conscience, of which you are the passive witnesses. Do what they bid you do. Submit to your nature, to nothing else. Obey duty. The consequences of this obedience you will accept as necessary, as true. Faith in certain ideas will result from it, but it will be a rational and unshakable faith, for it will be born of your own experience.

There is surely nothing absolutely new in this solution, which we believe to be the purport of M. Desjardins' message, although he nowhere expresses it in that form; nevertheless, we see in it the formulation of a truth which has always been the ultimate guide of man's life, unconsciously at first and rising slowly to consciousness with the progressive evolution of humanity; man does not acknowledge anything binding except that which he finds in himself; he may project it outwardly; he may first perceive it in some other person, who, then, becomes a revelator, and he may submit to his authority; or he may find the expression of his religious needs in the articles of a creed, and, unconsciously reversing the psychic process which has taken place, attribute to the creed itself an authority which, in reality, it owes to its symbolic expression of soul-contents which have not yet reached self-consciousness. The essence of a person's belief rests always on facts directly experienced, whatever may be the person's opinion on church and on creedal authority. The principles on which Desjardins proceeds, ap-

pear to be the crowning achievement of a process, for which the very clumsy word "moral-self-consciousification" might be suggested. The open declaration of this principle and the effort put forth to make it triumph, constitutes, it seems to us, a religious revolution, a revolution corresponding in the moral and religious world to the social and political Revolution of 1789. Then men were declared politically free and equal; to-day they are declared religiously independent from all external authority. In 1789 the sovereign authority of reason came to the self-consciousness of the mass; to-day the sovereign authority of conscience arrives to the self-consciousness of the mass. To the declaration of the political and social rights of man, France is about to add the declaration of the religious and moral rights of man. The psychologists of all lands will watch with intense interest the beginning of this new era, for we need not draw here your attention to the consequences of this revolution. It brings with it the realization of the more or less definite desires of the best men of all the civilized nations with regard to religious reforms. It heralds the fall of a religious authority not resting on the conscience. It is the death of tradition, which keeps us enchained to an age long over-grown; the fall of the intellectual creeds, the belief in which was and is still made the condition of salvation; but above all it is the aurora of a new day in which Christian love shall reign, because men will seek their inspiration in the holy revelations of their conscience.

M. Paul Desjardins appears to us the apostle of this Revolution. He has not, we must acknowledge, seen his way clearly from the first. Although in his early publications he declared himself neutral as to the various religious faiths, it appeared to many that he was leaning towards a reformed Roman Catholicism. Certain persons, for instance, related that he had gone to Rome and had received complete approbation from the Pope, and that from that day his work was under the tutelage of the church. M. Desjardins, indeed, went to Rome, but it was for the ostensible motive of obtaining a dispensation desired by some scrupulous Catholics in order to feel at liberty to work in common with heretics. The dispensation was granted. A month ago he defined clearly and decisively his attitude towards the church in general. Allow me in concluding to set forth before you this attitude as expressed in the articles published in the *Journal des Débats*, under the title, *La Conversion de l'Eglise* and *La Vraie Eglise* (the true church).

In the bold articles on the conversion of the church (November 1892), M. Desjardins proposes, without acrimony or violence, but also without tergiversation, what he considers to be the necessary transformations which the Roman Catholic Church must undergo in order to regain control over the people. It is in one word the return to the spirit of Christ. "The conversion through which the church must pass is a conversion of the heart. It must become again a school of love and of liberty. The church must bring to the Republic the breath which gives long life to cities in giving to each citizen that which is the whole of life according to Christ and according to reason, namely, the spirit of peace in self-devotion to mankind, and of faith in salvation through sacrifice. It must spiritualize itself previously to spiritualizing the people." The church is instituted perpetually to repeat by its example and by its speech: sacrifice yourselves; love and you shall live—and not to direct states. "The social duty of the church holds, then in these three rules: (1) To minister to the humble who carry the great burden; (2) To speak to them and to other men by means of love

and of self-sacrifice; (3) To develop among them that spirit of love and of self-sacrifice."

The church must then break with ambition, with wealth, with power, with the spirit of domination and of coercion. The whole of its authority must consist in the natural ascendancy exercised by respectability and amiability. It must no more be a wheel in the state machine. The spiritual must separate from the temporal. The shocking anti-Christian inequalities established by the traffic made with ceremonies and even by the dispensation of the sacraments must disappear. As no one can serve two masters, it is also evident that the church must detach itself from the worldly solemnities and customs which make of it a temple of Mammon, and that the false splendor of devotion, the various classes of marriages, etc., must be set aside.

The reader asks himself, what would remain of the Roman Catholic Church if all these reforms were realized? What would become of the hierarchy, of the entire submission of the one to the other? What of the infallible authority of the Pope? And as to dogmas, sacraments and other ordinances, a few lines at the end of the last article of November permit us to infer a radical denial of the intrinsic value given them by the church: "Public worship itself must not be overdone; inner fervor gives to it its whole value."

Under the title, *The Conversion of the Church*, M. Desjardins was, unwittingly or not, demanding the destruction of the Roman Catholic Church. This series of articles was suddenly interrupted, and the author had not yet clearly declared what everybody wanted to know, whether he entertained the intention of a future adhesion to the Church of Rome. At last, five months later, in April last, the *Journal des Débats* published the long expected conclusion. It was entitled *La Vraie Eglise*. In it M. Desjardins explains why, to remain Christian, he cannot become Romanist. The time elapsed between Christ's gospel and our century is to be regarded as a sort of prolongation of paganism still enveloping the pure Christian spirit. "Modern metaphysics has come to take up the work of Saint Paul and to consummate the rupture between the spirit and the law. Let us not hesitate, we must help on. Here is the hope of the future, not only of humanity, but also of true Christianity, which is but dawning."

Let us unite with Desjardins and his friends in the effort to shake off the encumbrances of the past. Let not the veneration we have for the works of the dead blind us to the needs of the living. The throes through which France is passing will soon reach to other nations. These throes are not to be feared, for they are but as the struggle of the butterfly endeavoring to set itself free from its gross-imprisoning chrysalis; man is about to take an epoch-making step toward the more complete realization of his divine nature.